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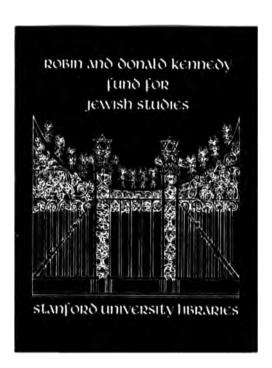
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Mr. Jacob A. Schiff,

a Prince of the Captivity

in a land of readow,

und these. Schiff.

A token of great regard

from

lanual Gordon

Possover 1916.



STORIES OF ISRAEL AMONG THE NATIONS

BY
SAMUEL GORDON



NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
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1916



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TO MY LITTLE DAUGHTER



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BLACK FLAME

I

HE morose face of old Zelig Kamnitzer grew less wrinkled and sullen as he listened to his interlocutor, and the lines of the severe mouth seemed to soften into something like an air of benevolence. Calman Schwartz saw it and took heart, and his words came out swifter than ever. When he had quite finished, Zelig Kamnitzer drew a few heavy puffs from his pipe, and looked hard at him for some seconds.

"So you want to marry my Gnendel?" he at last

summed up the young man's request.

"You have known it for a long time," was the eager reply.

Zelig nodded. "And do you know what it will mean to marry my Gnendel?" he asked again.

"That I shall be the happiest man in the world, Zelig."

The old man rose with a harsh, disagreeable laugh, and strode up and down the chamber.

Calman watched him with renewed apprehension. Was Zelig going to refuse him after all? "Perhaps I ought to impress upon you again that

I can afford to marry, Zelig," he said, a slight tremor in his voice. "My business is growing. This week I was offered another two hundred gulden credit if I wanted it. I am thinking—I have mentioned it to you before—in a few months perhaps I shall move from Kurnick to a larger town—to Tarnow or Pschemischel . . ."

Zelig turned to him with the same disagreeable laugh as before. "Quite right, my boy! Unpack all your greatness; dazzle me with your riches. I tell you, it doesn't want much to dazzle a pauper like me. Look"—he swept his arm round fiercely to indicate the contents of the miserable apartment—"all my worldly belongings wouldn't fetch two hundred kreutzers by auction. And my credit— I went the other night to get a tallow candle on tick, and the chandler wouldn't let me have it. What do you say to that, my boy?"

"I say that all that does not concern me, Zelig," replied Calman. "All I want is Gnendel—and you. You must come and live with us when we are married. You have worked enough in your time."

Zelig's mouth was hard-set as he answered: "Calman, you can't marry my Gnendel, because"—

- "Yes because?"
- "Because she is no fit wife for you."
- "Zelig!"
- "Because she is no fit wife for any good man," continued Zelig, watching the other, outwardly unperturbed. "Listen, Calman! Do you know my Gnendel?"
 - "Of course I do," was the vehement reply.

"Haven't I known her almost from the day I came to Kurnick? Certainly she is a little wild and headstrong . . ."

Again Zelig's gruff, disagreeable laugh interrupted him.

"A little wild and headstrong! Hark at him! You think that meets the case, my boy, do you? Well, then, let me tell you that you do not know my Gnendel. But I know her — to my sorrow be it said. I say to you, Calman, that my Gnendel is not a woman but a devil. I have kept it locked up in my breast all these years, and it has made me a man of few words. I was afraid that if I made a habit of talking I might blurt it all out one day, and make myself an object of ridicule - or even pity — to all who know me. But to you I must speak, Calman, because I am an honest man, though poor. And, greatly as I would love to call you my son, I must step in between you and your evil destiny. Calman, let be. Not you! not you! Perhaps some great big brute of a man, with an iron heart and a heavy hand, who will frighten her and break her to his will; but not you, Calman. Let be, I tell you. Find some other girl for whom you are more of a match. I won't let you fall a victim to my daughter unwarned. I am an honest man, though poor."

A deep breath, that was half apprehension and half relief, broke from Calman. He even essayed a laugh. "Come, Zelig," he said, "don't make me out a poorer specimen than I am. I shall know how to handle her."

Zelig ignored him and continued to pace the

chamber, wrapt in his own thoughts. "Why does God take the full ears of corn from the field and leave the tares?" he said, half to himself. the others have gone, and she remains. First there was Leika, so happy in her marriage. Then there was Shimmon — he went the second year he served with the soldiers. Faithful old Mindel was the last one to go. And now I have to thank God for leaving me Gnendel. But mark you, Calman!" — he turned on the other almost threateningly — "since she was left to me I mean to keep her. won't let her go from me to spread havoc else-Calman, it need not have been like this with me. I might have been living in comfort if she had only helped me in my business. But she won't. She is idle and prodigal, and forgetful of all that it beseems a Jewish daughter to be and to do. Listen! Last week I went to look for her, and where and how did I find her? Outside the town. on the back of a colt, sitting astride like a man, with all the farm-hands making rude jests to her, and she jesting back at them. Oh, if one of the congregation had seen her then as I saw her I should have died of shame!"

Calman paused a few moments in thought, and then he stepped resolutely up to Zelig.

"Tell me what you like, Zelig, my mind remains the same," he said. "No; if anything, my resolve becomes stronger. If, as you say, Gnendel is given so much to habits of waywardness and perversity, what better than that she should be steadied down and brought to anchor by the solemn bonds of wedlock? Let her learn as soon as possible the sacred duties of Jewish matronhood. I will teach them to her. Trust me, I shall make her a good teacher, Zelig. Not by force or brute strength shall I bring these things home to her; I shall make no attempt to break her with an iron hand, but I shall bend her by infinite patience and kindliness. Believe me, Zelig, now that I know the worst of her, I shall be able to do the best for her. Leave her to me."

Zelig blinked violently, as though he were trying to crush something between those thick eyelids of his. Then he came and laid his hand gently on the other's shoulder.

"Well, Calman, in God's name, then. With the Almighty's help all may be right. I did my duty, Calman, and warned you; but I did it with a breaking heart. After all, she is my child, and I want to see her happy; I want to see you also happy—you, Calman, whom I have always loved as a son. Well, here's my hand on it."

The two men stood silently for a few moments, looking hard into each other's eyes.

"Where — where is Gnendel?" Calman asked at last.

"I don't know. She went out some hours ago. But no doubt she will be here soon. You may wait if you like."

Calman nodded contentedly, and was about to seat himself on a chair, when his ears caught in the distance a confused noise, in which human shouts were blurred with the sound of musical instruments. The noise came nearer and nearer, until it struck even on Zelig's blunter hearing. The two of them stepped to the window.



В

"What can it be?" asked Zelig, puzzled.

"I think it must be the gypsy circus which the people in the town have been expecting for the past few days," replied Calman.

"Oh, a circus!" echoed Zelig indifferently. What were these foibles and vanities of the world to him? He was about to move away, when he

stopped, held by a sudden thought.

A few minutes later the van of the procession hove in sight. Swarthy men and women, tawdrily attired in make-believe splendor and hung with pinchbeck trinkets, came riding along on gayly caparisoned horses, keeping step to the blare of unmelodious trumpets and the thud of kettle-The cavalcade was flanked on either side by clowns in motley, who ran along turning grotesque somersaults. In the rear there followed a huzzaing mob of boys and girls, sprinkled with a few adults, and at the head of them all was-Gnendel.

The red kerchief that had covered her head had fallen back over her shoulders; her coal-black hair had broken loose from the confining ribbon and was fluttering in the breeze like sable pennons. The gaudy sash round her waist; the bright, joyous, provocative eyes; the crimson lips, parted in a laugh and showing alabaster teeth, gave her the look of a Bacchante. Of course that was not the comparison old Zelig applied to her; he could not compare her to anything for the moment. All he could do was to ask himself, with a feeling of impotent anger, why this bold-faced hoyden had been given him for a daughter. So that was why she had been away from home all these hours! She had gone forth with the riff-raff of the town to meet these mountebanks, to join this guard of dishonor that gave them escort! And she was seventeen last birthday!

But, great as was his anger, it was yet tempered by fear. What was Calman thinking? For, despite everything, she was his child, and he wanted to see her happy, as he had said — happy and safe in the keeping of a man who would not crush her heart with an iron hand.

And just then Calman, who had also been thinking, turned to him and made a straight answer to the other's unspoken thought: "Zelig — yes, I am willing to take the risk."

The procession had come to a halt in front of their window. Zelig leant out and beckoned to Gnendel as soon as he caught her gaze. She seemed to hesitate an instant, and a mutinous pout puckered her mouth; but in the end she detached herself from the throng and entered the house.

Zelig listened, and when he had assured himself of her approach he sat down at the table, his manner curiously firm and determined, took a sheet of parchment and pen and ink, and began to write busily. Presently Gnendel entered, shutting the door behind her, but remaining with her back close to it, without stepping farther into the room. So she stood, the rebellious pout still on her lips, without a word of greeting to either of the men, letting her glance shift composedly from her father to Cal-

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man. The latter was nervously toying with a book; Zelig continued at his parchment without looking up.

So the constrained silence kept on, broken only by the scratching of Zelig's quill, until at length a huge flourish, accompanied by much spluttering of ink, signified that he had come to the end. Ponderously he rose from his chair, and, smiling somewhat awkwardly, came towards Gnendel.

"Do you know what I have here?" he asked her, pointing to the document in his hand.

She tossed her head and shrugged her shoulders as she replied: "How should I know, father?"

The answer and the gesture that went with it evidently did not please Zelig, but his voice was still strangely gentle as he proceeded: "I have here written out your engagement-contract, Gnendel. Calman has asked me to let you become his wife, and I have consented. In fact, it will please me very much. He will make you a good husband."

"How much have you promised him for my dowry?" asked Gnendel, on whom the information had produced no visible effect.

"Nothing. He says he does not require any."

"Well, then, what has he promised you?" continued Gnendel with a laugh.

"He says I may come and live with you when you are married," replied Zelig, his forehead becoming clouded.

"Oh, I see! Is that what he bribed you with?" said Gnendel lightly. "Well, tell him, father, that I can't be bought and sold like one of his earthen-

ware pots. Luckily, I have a mouth that can say no or yes as it suits me, and this time it's no!"

"Gnendel!" exclaimed Zelig, white with anger.

"Oh, hush, father! It's not worth while making such a noise about. It was hardly worth while calling me in for. I could as well have given my answer another time. It would have been quite the same answer, though, mind you. I don't want to get married. And, besides, just now I am very hungry."

She was moving off in the direction of the wooden larder opposite, when Zelig, with a strangled shout, sprang upon her, gripped her by the hair with one hand, and with the other, tight clenched, rained blow on blow down upon her head and shoulders.

Gnendel stood perfectly still, offering no resistance, not even lifting an arm to protect her face against her father's violence.

"Zelig, you are mad! For God's sake let her go!" she next heard Calman cry brokenly.

And a moment later she was free, and saw Calman drag her father away and deposit him in the chair farthest from her. With blazing eyes and heaving chest she watched them. Her lips had resumed their mocking pout. But she did not go from the room. With slow and deliberate step she walked over to a corner and there huddled herself down in a heap, crouching uncannily, her face pressed into her folded arms, and her thick black mane, disordered by her father's rude handling, enveloping her like a cloak to her feet. Force of habit was too strong for her. That was how she had sulked, hour after hour, when she had been

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beaten as a child. And the days of her childhood were, after all, not so very far behind her.

The room was becoming draped in evening shadows. Gnendel, still crouching, had heard the door open and shut. That was, she presumed, when Calman took his departure. Some time afterwards — she could not tell whether it was minutes or hours — her father had got up from his chair, wheezing and groaning brokenly, and had shuffled off to the apartment in which he slept, leaving her all alone.

Gnendel still made no move. She was only just beginning to be comfortable in her corner. Her father's presence had insensibly clogged her thoughts, but now they rushed on with the force and swiftness of mill-flails which the open dam has set swirling. She knew that the happenings of that day had put the climax on the long period of discontent and vague, unsatisfied longings which had crowded the brief years of her girlhood.

For the first time she made a deliberate attempt to find out what had come between her and her father. For three years now this tacit hostility had been the order of the day — tacit except for the not infrequent occasions which brought it to open demonstration. Three years — yes, since her mother's last illness. It was then that she had felt the first symptoms of this own great malady of hers. It was brought on, no doubt, by those long spells of watching at her mother's sick-bed, those terrible day-and-night vigils, when she saw the beloved face become more and more wan with the grayness of the approaching shadow.

Little by little, but none the less surely, an unconscious resentment had taken root in her as she compared the pain-warped frame, wasting away beyond all recognition, with the still upright and sturdy figure of her father, as in seeming unconcern he went about the business of the day. Oh, how gladly would she not have given of her own flaming young life if she could have but added strength and permanence to that weakly flickering spark! But her father—

And so her anger had sunk deeper and deeper into her heart, became chronic, became a passion, preventing her from suspecting, as she did not suspect even now, what secret and impotent agonies were masked under Zelig's hard, unresponsive countenance. To Gnendel it had always seemed—and at this moment the thought came home to her more strongly than ever—that if her father had only loved her mother more truly she might have been living to that day. And obdurate natures that they were, the pair of them, both father and daughter, there never had been an explanation.

With her mother's death there opened for Gnendel an era of lawlessness and revolt. Nothing in the old life remained sweet or desirable. The necessity for blunting the aching memory of her loss, the withdrawal of the kindly, beneficent control on her naturally intractable spirit, the ever-widening breach with her father, all combined to drive her into seeking strange distractions and to reduce her mind to a state of chaotic turbulence. It was torture for her to be at home, where penury

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in the absence of her mother's redeeming smile had become downright starvation, where the walls were murky with cobwebs of care and the floor honeycombed with the pitfalls of cross-purposes.

So she became a denizen of forest and field, making friends with wild things in whom the instincts for liberty were as strong as they were in her, taking delight in converse with rough, uncouth people, and generally losing touch with the conditions of life to which her earlier associations should have bound her. She was beginning to be whispered about in the town. The mothers in the place forbade their daughters — and their sons too, for the matter of that — to have communication with her. Gnendel laughed at all she heard and saw, and, if anything, flaunted herself more in their sight, carried her head higher, for she knew it was no crime to breathe the free air of heaven, and pitied those who were unhappy enough not to be born with the taste for it. She pitied and despised them, all of them, except perhaps -

Yes, there was Calman Schwartz. He had come to Kurnick two years ago from nowhere in particular. He had come quietly, and unostentatiously, keeping in the background except for the requirements of his business, although he had plenty of inducements to step into greater prominence. For the householders with marriageable daughters soon found out that he was a steady, painstaking young man, who had made up his mind to get on in the world, and would be able to keep a wife in comfort. His shop was almost next door to Zelig's dwelling, and one evening he had strolled in casually, uncere-

moniously, after the manner in which acquaintances were started among people of their class.
He had sat down, accepted the glass of tea and
lemon Zelig had offered him, and half-an-hour
later they were chatting as if they had known each
other all their lives. Gnendel remembered the incident, because she had happened to be at home
tinkering away at some new bit of finery, Zelig's
railings at which Calman's entrance had interrupted. The visitor's unruffled calm had got on her
nerves, and she had felt sorely tempted to play some
prank on him, just because he looked the sort of
man on whom one should not play pranks.

After that they had met a great many times, in and out of the house; but they had not approached each other an inch in their mutual attitude. Calman's placid, somewhat sleepy eyes did not even flash into recognition at sight of her. And yet of late. now that she came to think of it, a look of inquiry had come into them that had robbed them of their wonted steadiness when they encountered hers. So that was what he had been asking himself: whether he should do her the honor of making her his wife! That had been the stone he had cast into the stagnant pool he called his soul, and had ruffled its surface! Very good! And now he had fished out his stone again — he had had her answer. Gnendel laughed. After all, she had had her chance of playing her great prank on him. She would not have missed it for worlds, and certainly not for this stupid world in which she was living now!

She struggled to her feet, and in the gloom took

in as much as she could of the skeleton bareness of her home. Well, to-day finished it. To-day had made history for her, had become the birthday of her new life, a full life, a merry life, with great bright patches of color in it, with long resonances of cymbal and drum and gay pageantry to cram the hungry heart of her youth. Yes, she would go at once. What had she to wait for? Through the half-open inner door came the stertorous breathing of her father. It conveyed nothing to her — no regret, no reproach. He had never required her good-nights; he would not miss her good-morning. Noiselessly she undid the catch and stepped out into the silent street.

Immediately a figure loomed up beside her. Before she had time to be frightened she had recognized Calman. She was about to pass him without a word.

"Out so late, Gnendel?" he said quietly.

She gave a start. It was the first time he had talked to her so personally or mentioned her by her name. But she speedily brushed these considerations aside.

"What does that matter to you?" she replied coldly. "I may go about my business whenever I like, may I not?"

"Certainly, as long as it's business one would never like undone."

"Insolence!" she snapped.

Calman came and deliberately put himself in her way.

"Listen, Gnendel. I have been watching here all the time, because I had an idea that after what

happened you would do something you might regret. Wait at least till you can think calmly — or at least till you are calm enough to allow me to think for you. Wait, Gnendel, I say."

"That would do you little good," was her quick reply. "I will never wait long enough to say yes to becoming your wife."

"Why not?"

"Why not?" she mocked him. "Because you saw me beaten like a dog, and a beaten dog can never aspire to be mistress in her house."

"You shall be in mine, Gnendel," he said fervently.

"But I don't want to be, I tell you. Let me go."
"And your father, Gnendel?"

She hesitated a moment; then she turned to him with a mock-confidential air. "You're not a bad sort, I think, and as a reward I'll let you into a secret. The real reason why I am running away is because — I like my father too well. One of these days I may do something to bring on an apoplectic fit, and that would be the end of him. I have a decided objection to being my father's murderess."

His arms fell limply to his side, and he moved away a few steps. "Where are you going?" he asked, coming to a halt again.

"That's a matter entirely for myself."

"Then I shall follow you," he said resolutely.

"Oh, will you? I should advise you not to. Where I am going they keep big dogs, and they might set them on you if I give the word. And I shall give it, be sure I shall."



"I shall not molest you, only tell me where!" he implored her.

"Well, then, to the circus."

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He gasped. "Gnendel — you, to the gypsies?"
"Yes. Why not? They will be glad to have
me. The riding-master spoke to me as I went along
with the procession. He said I had only to come
and they would receive me with open arms. I am
going to try them. And now, please, I'm in a
hurry."

She pushed past him and hastened down the street at the top of her speed.

Calman made no attempt to pursue her. He went back into his shop and closed up for the night. On his face a smile and a frown blended curiously. It might be the expression of a man who thinks he has got rid of a great anxiety, but on second thoughts is not quite sure of it.

II

Summers and winters—four of them—had come and gone, but Gnendel did not return. Otherwise Kurnick was still very much the Kurnick it had been. It still contained Calman, despite the pestering of the marriage-mongers and his resolution to remove to a larger sphere of activity. Yes, Calman Schwartz was a most excellent young man, but it was a pity he should be so obstinate. Chop and stab and break him, you couldn't get him to marry. Instead of taking to himself a nice little wife who would make his home

cozy and see that he got his meals regularly, he preferred to keep house with snuffy, doddering old Zelig Kamnitzer; and how he managed to stand the life goodness only knew. But the fact remained.

It was for two reasons that Calman had stayed on in Kurnick: one was his own, and the other was Zelig's. Zelig's reason appeared in the interview which Calman had with him some weeks after Gnendel's disappearance.

- "I have a project, Zelig," he had said.
- "It's sure to be a good one."
- "That will depend on you. I want you to come and live with me."
 - "Why, Calman?"
- "Because, if I had married your daughter you would have made your home with us. Now that through my fault you have lost a daughter, how much more reason is there that through me you should find a home!"

Zelig looked at him with eyes that were clear enough in vision, and from Calman he looked to his own palsy-stricken right hand which told him that never again would he be able to write the tiny phylactery-scrolls and door-post amulets by which he had eked out his scanty livelihood. And then he thought of the bleak horror of the poorhouse, of the pauper's free seat in the synagogue, of the pauper's free grave in the cemetery. That free grave decided him. But as a last loophole from the degradation of eating a stranger's bread, he laid down his condition.

"I will do you the honor of accepting your

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charity, Calman," he replied; "but it must be here in Kurnick. I must finish my days in the place where I have tasted of my few joys and where I have been stricken with my many sorrows."

Calman agreed to the stipulation with a readiness which greatly surprised Zelig, who of course knew of the young man's larger ambitions. Calman could not explain to him that his own reason for remaining in Kurnick was that here, after all, was the most likely place where his heart's desire would be gratified, and he would set eyes once more on Gnendel. She would come back here some day—he was sure of that. Only, he must not say so, for her name dared not be mentioned in Zelig's hearing.

In those first poignant days Zelig had answered curtly and dispassionately to all inquirers, malicious and sympathetic alike, that Gnendel was dead; later on — perhaps it was a sign of incipient senility — he seemed to believe in his own fiction. He began to speak of her again to Calman of his own accord. He even spoke of her with a loving sadness, as though it were unkind to pursue her with malice in a place where it could no longer have any effect on her. Nay, he looked upon her death as a special sign of the favor in which God held him. To how many men was it given to have all their dear ones taken in advance to prepare for them a louder and a cheerier welcome in the lone, solemn spaces beyond?

Calman felt he had a great deal to make good to Zelig. All through he was haunted by a sense of personal guilt. That poor mean home — however little it might have been worthy of the name, but such as it had been - it was he who had wrecked But more — what had possessed him to let Gnendel go so lightly to her fate the night she disappeared? He remembered how he had lain awake for hours, the frowning smile still on his face as amusement and irritation struggled for mastery within him at her outrageous threat of joining the gypsy caravan. The only excuse he could make himself was that the very enormity of it had lulled him into a false security. How would she have the heart, the physical courage, to do such a thing? Had he dreamed she was serious he would have followed her and dragged her back even if all the bloodhounds in the world were gripping him by the throat.

No; he had thought she would find a shake-down with some acquaintance overnight, and in the morning return, not penitent, not aggressive, but just her usual insouciant self. But she did not return the next morning, or the next, or at all. And even if he followed and challenged the gypsies, who had struck camp the next day, what right had he to interfere with Gnendel's movements? He could do nothing without calling in Zelig's coöperation, and that was entirely out of the question. What would Zelig say to the suggestion of receiving back into his house a daughter who had lived in the midst of a set of vagabond mountebanks? No, no; Zelig was much better off in thinking, or in pretending to think, of her as dead.

And Calman himself? In his memories of her there mingled no shadow of pique or chagrin. He

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thought of her mostly with a deep pity in his heart as a homeless waif, wandering blindly, helplessly through the world, and perhaps finding a little disinterested kindness here and there, but more often struggling desperately to keep a precarious foothold on slippery roads. He liked to imagine that she had found a home with some respectable family, and was doing menial work in return for food and shelter. Her white little hands—how he had loved watching those white little hands!—were by now, no doubt, red and rough with toil. Poor little Gnendel! Oh, why had he wanted to marry her?

So ran his thoughts, and therefore it was a great shock to him when something happened which fundamentally upset all his theories. One morning. on going to the post-office, he found there a registered letter addressed to Zelig Kamnitzer. ceived it with a trembling hand. A strong presentiment was upon him that the letter contained something Zelig must not see. As Zelig's patron-guardian it behooved him to keep the old man safe against anything that threatened him with harm. Quickly, before he could change his mind, he tore open the envelope. Its enclosure was strange in: Not a word of writing - nothing but ten crisp five-gulden notes.

Calman's heart almost stopped beating. How did these five-gulden notes accord with his supposition that Gnendel was earning her living as a household drudge? And what explanation was he to offer Zelig? Yes, it was just as well that he had opened that letter beforehand. Zelig must never

know of it. He did not need the money. He had everything he wanted: the best of food and drink and clothing, and his canister was always full of tobacco for that everlasting chibouc of his. Calman made a detour to call at the local bank, where he deposited the money in Zelig's name.

He did the same with all the following missives, which now continued to arrive at almost regular intervals, always without a word of news from the sender. The only information he could glean was from the postmark. This was never the same—each letter came from a different locality, sometimes Moravia, again from Bohemia, and once even from France. Every successive remittance sent Calman into a greater panic of apprehension. How long would he be able to bear the strain of keeping the secret from Zelig?

After all, it was an unpardonable theft to rob this old man of the knowledge that a child of his was still living. Calman began to see clearly that he could not go on playing this dangerous and questionable game much longer. He must take some action, and that soon. The easiest thing to be done was the most difficult: to find Gnendel, to go to her and implore her for her father's sake to give up this hide-and-seek business. There was one circumstance to favor him in the search. three letters had all borne the Vienna postmark. It would seem as though she had taken a more permanent abode in that city. True, Vienna was a large place, but it was not so large as the whole world, and he knew at least within what limits to make a start. He clinched his resolve one night,

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and the next morning he told Zelig that he would have to go away to establish commercial relations with a big firm in Vienna.

"Very well; I shall go with you," said Zelig promptly.

Calman was taken aback. This did not fit in at all with his arrangements. Hampered by Zelig, he would not have the freedom of movement he required for his difficult task. He argued with the old man, finding excuses and subterfuges, and disposing of Zelig's suggestion that he might do the transaction by letter as he had always done up till then. And when, in answer to Zelig's pressing question, he had to admit that he did not know how long he would be away, he saw the old face become puckered and wan, and the tears roll down the wizened cheeks.

"It's your own fault, Calman," said Zelig. "Why have you been so good to me? You have never let me out of your sight, you have never relaxed your watchful care for an instant, and I have become like a child, depending on you for everything. If you left me behind, alone, I should — I should perhaps die of fright, Calman."

Calman saw there was no escaping the difficulty. If he wanted to go he must take Zelig with him. But that, of course, was better than not going at all. So he packed Zelig up in a great fur coat—the season was May, but it was still rather cold—and took him to Vienna second class, much as Zelig protested against the extravagance. They took up their lodgings with some relatives of Calman, so that Zelig might have company during Calman's

absences instead of being left to his own devices at an hotel.

It was only when, on the morning after their arrival, Calman made his way out into the streets of the capital that he was really confronted with the vastness of his quest. He felt dazed and helpless as he stepped along, caught in those great eddies of humanity whirling in and out of long labyrinthine rows of sphinx-like masonry. Yes, dumb and articulate things alike seemed unable to offer him the least assistance in his task. There was no one to ask, no one to guide him; there was nothing to be relied upon save the elusive mockery of chance. Yet he did not feel disheartened. The spring poured into his soul the elixir of hope, and in his veins glowed the buoyant promise of youth, with its eternally recuperative sense of achievement. He would find Gnendel; he was as sure of it as if he had already found her.

Among the innumerable posters which covered the hoardings there was one which again and again drew his attention. It showed the figure of a woman driving a team of horses, the whole sketched with a few daring lines in a subtle combination of red and black. The masterly niggardliness of means, the very incompleteness of the picture, left upon one the impression of unlimited breadth and space. The horses seemed to be thudding their From way into immeasurable distances. woman there emanated a sense of barbaric splendor and elemental strength. She might be an oriental queen driving her triumphal chariot over the prostrate bodies of her enemies. She might be rushing

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on to meet the mythical sun-god in the empyrean. The legend which haloed her head, in letters drawn to the shape of forked lightning, only seemed to add to the mystery and aloofness of the picture: "Flamme Noire!" Calman did not even know enough French to interpret the simple words.

He had already passed several of the posters—they were distributed with lavish profuseness—when one struck him again with renewed force at a corner of a broad boulevard, where he could focus it into a better perspective. He stopped, and then mechanically took a pace backward, and then several more paces, until, without noticing it, he had stepped off the pavement and well out into the roadway.

All at once there was a shout, and he felt himself violently jerked aside. When he recovered his footing and looked round, he saw he had been closely shaved by a man on horseback, who was riding by the side of an open carriage. He was a splendidlooking fellow, in the undress uniform of a Cuirassier officer, sitting his horse like a centaur. carriage was going at a good pace and had not slowed up, and therefore Calman saw nothing of the woman in it except that she wore a red cloak and that her hair shone with a lustrous blackness. The man on horseback had caught her up, and was evidently explaining to her the nature of the accident, for he was laughingly pointing back at the poster. And then the woman slightly threw back her head and laughed as well. Probably they were laughing at the stupid country booby who had nearly got himself run over and perhaps killed in

order to satisfy his curiosity at a colored daub on a wall.

Calman did not mind; it was quite a pleasure to be laughed at by two such resplendent creatures. And then suddenly a ray of intelligence flashed across his mind. The poise of the woman's head when she laughed, the lustrous black hair, the flaming red cloak! There seemed to be some vague correspondence between her and the red-and-black figure on the poster; the one appeared to be the other. And further, by some undefined association, the two referred themselves back to a common original, to a familiar intimate prototype struggling up from abysmal depths of memory. Calman shook himself awake. He was letting his imagination run away with him: he was giving himself up to absurd fantasies. He was here to look for Gnendel. and instead he had taken to weaving romances around wall-posters and living apparitions in red.

But, all the same, Calman could not drive either from his mind; and when, late in the afternoon, he returned to his cousin's, the first question he asked him — he had been too shy to ask it of strangers in the street — was the meaning of the woman with the horses. His cousin, a grave, elderly man, had no clear recollection of the poster, and suggested that it might be an advertisement of a great firm of harness-makers. Or, rather, now that he came to think of it, it was an annonce of a woman who was supposed to do some wonderful things at the Hippodrome. Zelig, who had been listening, later on in the evening surprised Calman by a rather strange request.

"Calman, I want you to do me a favor."

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- "Well?" asked Calman.
- "Take me to the circus."

Calman gave a little gasp, which he quickly turned into a laugh Still, he did not quite know why there should be that note of uneasiness in his laugh. Perhaps it was due to a certain shiftiness, an air of cunning, in Zelig's manner which he did not quite understand.

"Why, Zelig," he replied, "that is about the last thing in the world I expected you to ask for."

Zelig shook his head rather vehemently as he replied, "Why not? It may seem a strange notion to you, but it has been running through my head for a long time."

"What has, Zelig?"

"The circus, Calman. And when the circus was mentioned to-night it took me more strongly than I was thinking that it was on account of some trespass I committed that God took my Gnendel away from me. You remember, Calman, the day when the gypsy circus came through the town? When I looked on those people, I hated and despised — nay, I cursed them all because my Gnendel was running at their heels. Was that their fault? I cursed something that God had willed should be. If God had not willed that there should be circuses He would not have allowed the brain of man to Therefore, Calman, I want to go to create them. such a circus to tell God that I repent of having shown contempt for what, through His wisdom, the mind of man has devised. Am I not right, Calman?"

Silently Calman nodded assent. He had intended going to the circus by himself the following evening, but why should he not humor the old man? Away from the reminders of the hoardings, he saw how absurd he had been to magnify the incident of the posters. It only showed him how full he was of the object of his coming that he made even the most utter incongruities fit into the scheme of it. Zelig's motive for wishing to go to the circus was quite rational compared with his; so he would be rational too.

He set himself to reduce his adventure to a more practical plan. He would give himself a fortnight for the search. He would first pursue his inquiries privately. After all, a striking-looking girl like Gnendel could not have remained altogether unnoticed, and he had a good many acquaintances in Vienna on whose coöperation he could rely. And if his own efforts proved unavailing, he would, previous to his return to Kurnick, place the matter in the hands of a first-rate detective agency.

He was out and about again all the next day, and then went home to redeem his promise to Zelig. He found the old man curiously excited with the prospect of the evening's entertainment. Calman had determined that Zelig should see the show in comfort, and therefore he had booked two fauteuils parterre at one of the booking-offices in the town. He had there assured himself definitely that it was indeed the woman of the posters who was the great attraction at the circus, and he looked forward to seeing her with a mild sort of impatience. He thus felt a correspondingly mild disappointment when,

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on entering the vestibule of the Hippodrome, he was faced with a placard which said that the management craved the kind indulgence of their patrons, and begged to inform them that the appearance of Mademoiselle Flamme Noire that evening would depend on circumstances as to which they were not permitted to go into detail.

The performance was nearing its close; a good many of the audience were getting ready to leave, grumbling at their ill-luck in having missed the great turn of the program. Calman did not sympathize with them. A strange feeling of relief was Just this night of all nights the woman upon him. of the posters was not to appear. Was there anything of the providential about that? If he were not ashamed to admit it to himself, he would have said that, despite all his previous self-reassurances. he feared this black-and-red woman. He had escaped her to-night, and he would never come here again. He could not tell why, unless it was for the half-superstitious dread, into which the matter had unconsciously crystallized itself in his mind, that if he saw this woman he would never again stand face to face with Gnendel.

"Let us go, Zelig," he said, preparing to help the old man into his coat.

"But it's not over yet, is it?" said Zelig, a little gruffly. "You have paid dearly enough for these seats. Let us at least have our full money's worth."

With an indulgent shoulder-shrug, Calman seated himself again. A few minutes more or less, what did it matter? But it mattered a great deal. Almost at the same moment something occurred to galvanize the somewhat jaded interest of the audience back into full swing. Calman, looking up, saw that a box to the farthest left of him had all at once had its curtains drawn aside and had blazed into a brilliant light. He could notice now that it was surmounted by the imperial arms.

Presently a group of gentlemen appeared in the box, and among them Calman recognized the young man who had nearly ridden him down the day before. He was now in full uniform. He escorted one of his companions to the chair in the center, and then with the others respectfully took his stand behind. A look of comprehension passed over the faces of the beholders. Why, of course, that was why Flamme Noire had been reserving herself. One of the archdukes had been expected, and she had had to wait his arrival.

Their surmise proved correct. For, a few seconds later, the great doors at the rear of the ring were flung open, and a crowd of gold-coated grooms and flunkeys sprang forward and formed themselves into a glittering avenue. And then a roar of acclaim rent the air as, standing high on a magnificent gray, Flamme Noire bounded into the enclosure. Making her way straight up to the imperial loge, she dropped a graceful curtsy, to which the distinguished visitor replied by rising and drawing himself up to the salute.

The hush that followed was but an imperfect tribute to the wonderful picture the woman made. The tight-fitting robe of flaming velvet, starting low down at the shoulders and exposing the gleaming neck, indicated limbs exquisite in outline.

Great masses of hair, clustering over the forehead and over the deep, smoldering eyes, undulated endlessly in waves of ebony black, merged in mysterious harmony with the fiery habit, and justified by a bizarre combination of flame and gloom the contradictoriness of the name she was known by. In a slow canter she made the round of the ring in the direction of Calman and Zelig. To the renewed volleys of applause that greeted her she replied with a barely perceptible smile, her head proud and erect, as one who knows the power she wields.

Calman, seeing — and recognizing her, retained sufficient presence of mind to rise slowly and whisper into Zelig's ear, with an attempted laugh: "Come away, Zelig. This is not for us."

"Not for us! Why not?" asked Zelig, lifting himself half-way from his seat.

"There's no reason, Zelig," said Calman hoarsely; "but it's so late. I have some letters to write to go by to-night's post, and — and I don't like watching people trying to break their necks."

Zelig turned and had a good look at him. "Why do you stare so? Do you see anything?" he asked, craning his neck to follow the direction of Calman's fascinated gaze. Then he gave a lurch, and the fingers of his palsied hand closed on Calman's arm with a grip which made them seem suddenly and miraculously endowed with superhuman strength.

"Calman! Calman!" he whimpered again, "do you see anything?"

"For the love of heaven, Zelig, let us go!" replied Calman.

The old man had tottered back into his seat.

With a frantic gesture he was passing his hand to and fro before his eyes as though to chase away the mists which had gathered there.

"Come, Zelig," urged Calman more fiercely.

"No, no, Calman; let me see—let me have a glimpse of her," panted Zelig. "She has come back from the grave, but she has left her shroud behind. Look, she is naked to the waist! My Gnendel, my child, is showing herself naked before the people, like a very wanton! For the sake of her mother, who was a good woman, give her something wherewith to clothe her shoulders. My Gnendel! My child!"

A low whistling sound from his throat cut short his gibbering speech. A storm of angry remonstrances had risen from those sitting near at the interruption. Several attendants rushed to the spot and rudely dragged Zelig to the exit. A journalist a few seats away took note of the incident. It would make good "copy." What stronger testimony to the magic of Flamme Noire than this old Jew who had gone out of his wits at sight of her? That old Jew was a far greater compliment to her than even a dozen admiring archdukes.

III

Calman sat by the bedside of Zelig, who lay tossing in the throes of delirium. Calman had nothing else to do now. Gnendel had been found, and he could devote all his time to Zelig. The doctor's diagnosis was that, great as the shock

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had been — Calman, of course, said nothing about the cause of it — no immediate danger threatened the patient in his present state of mental aberration; but he could not answer for the reaction which might set in when the old man regained his sanity. It was highly advisable that before that happened he should be taken back, by the best means possible, to familiar environments, which would do much to soften the impact of clearer and more rational impressions.

Calman eagerly fell in with the suggestion. He was prepared to do everything in his power to rid his conscience of the catastrophe he had brought about. But for him Zelig would not be here, Zelig would not be raving unutterable things. It was he who had driven him mad. What a clumsy fool he was, always tinkering at the destinies of father and daughter, strangers with whom he really had no right to interfere, and always knotting the tangle more confusedly!

Sparing no expense, he had the old man transported back by easy stages to Kurnick, not leaving him for an instant, and installing himself as Zelig's nurse from the moment of their return, to the disregard of all his other affairs. He would lose a few hundred gulden as long as he saved for Zelig from the wreck of his life that one precious thing—his reason.

He succeeded at least partially.

A week later Zelig sat up and looked about him with eyes that were no longer wild and unintelligent. "Where is Gnendel?" he asked.

Blankly Calman looked back at him, not knowing what the question meant.

"Where is Gnendel?" Zelig repeated impatiently.

"She has gone out, but she will be back soon," Calman replied at a venture.

Zelig nodded, and with a sigh of content turned on his side and dozed off again. But half-an-hour later he sat up a second time and put the same question.

"She has not come back yet. I expect her every moment, however," Calman replied soothingly. He thought he had discovered the way of dealing with Zelig now.

But this time Zelig was not satisfied with the answer. His face clouded, and he looked angry, as he used to do in the old days. "Where can she be, the gadabout?" he exclaimed. "Always away—always away from me, and I want her here and there and everywhere. Look, she hasn't swept the room yet; and I want her to mix some fresh ink for me—this is all clotted. I'll break every bone in her body when I get hold of her, the hussy!"

And that was how it went all day long. Zelig continued to ask for Gnendel, sometimes plaintively, sometimes grumpily, and again in a veritable access of fury. But at last he got tired of grumbling and storming, and took matters into his own hands.

Calman, after a brief absence from the room, came upon him sitting on the edge of the bed and struggling helplessly to get into his clothes.

"What are you about, Zelig?" he cried, seriously alarmed. "You know the doctor says you must not get up for a few days."

"I don't care what the doctor says," replied Zelig doggedly. "I'm going out to find my Gnendel."

Calman looked about him despairingly, as though to discover some way of meeting this unexpected and difficult contingency. Then an inspiration came to him. "Now, since you force me to it, Zelig, I'll tell you the truth; but Gnendel will be disappointed that I did not keep the secret. It was to be a surprise to you. Gnendel has gone to Cracow, and has taken with her those two Scrolls of the Law you have not been able to sell. They are building a new synagogue there, and she thought that would be a good chance of finding a purchaser for them. But, of course, it will take a little time. You know how they are likely to haggle over the price."

"Oh, indeed! So she has at last found out which side her bread is buttered," said Zelig with a sort of sullen satisfaction. "But she has been away quite long enough. Her place is here with me. I'm going to fetch her back."

Calman's heart heaved into his mouth. "Oh no, Zelig, you can't do that. How can you venture to travel alone? Why, you wouldn't find the way. But if you won't mind my leaving you for a day or so, I'll go and fetch her myself."

"Oh, by all means. I don't care whether you go or I go; but somebody must go," grunted Zelig. "Tell her she must come back at once."

Calman straightway set about making his ar-

rangements. He provided a trustworthy nurse for Zelig, and then packed his portmanteau for Vienna. He must lose no time. He knew he could not be away longer than two days at the utmost. And if this thing was to be done at all, it must be done before his resolution failed him. It was a tremendous task he had undertaken, a forlorn hope. a venture doomed to certain failure from the start. Its success was discounted even more by his selfreproach for attempting to meddle again with the affairs of people to whom he had been an influence for evil all through. But the attempt, for all that, had a fascination of its own. He wanted to gauge how deep a man, who intended to reach as high as he, could be thrust back into the abyss of humiliation. He, the petty shopkeeper, was about to stand before a world-celebrity, the idol of millions, and ask her to do her duty. Oh yes, it should be an interesting experiment, if nothing more.

He reached Vienna in the afternoon, made his way at once to the Hippodrome, and there, by judicious backsheesh, ascertained the address of Mademoiselle Flamme Noire. He took a fiacre and drove up to the house, which rather impressed the porter, who let him through with nothing more than a suspicious scrutiny. He had rather more difficulty with the pert house-maid who answered his ring at the door-bell on the first étage. What did he want? It was impossible for mademoiselle to see anybody — unless, perhaps, he was the jeweler's man. No? If not, did he have a letter of introduction? Otherwise he had better write his business to mademoiselle.

To this hailstorm of questions Calman replied by standing firm in the doorway and insisting that he must see the lady. He marveled at his own calmness, but he felt all the time that pent up in his breast there lay a very tempest of emotions which, if once let loose, would sweep him off his feet. But he had not yet got beyond that housemaid.

"Mademoiselle knows me," he said at last in desperation.

"Then give me your name, and I will make sure," was the reply.

Here was another difficulty. Would Gnendel see him if she knew who he was? He tried to make his answer as non-committal as possible. "Say somebody from Kurnick."

"From where?"

"Kurnick," repeated Calman, much louder than he had yet spoken.

The sound of the word must have penetrated within, for just as the maid was about to close the door, leaving Calman to wait outside, there was a hasty swishing of frocks and an imperious voice said: "One moment, Anna."

The next moment Calman was facing Gnendel. Oh, it was Gnendel right enough, despite the magnificent draperies of her gown and the diamond bracelets sparkling on her arms. Without flurry or surprise, quite simple and unaffected, she held out to him a hand of welcome.

"Ah, Herr Schwartz, how nice of you to come and see me like this! I suppose you are in Vienna on business."

"Yes, on business," replied Calman, trying to keep an even voice.

"Well, come in, and tell me all about Kurnick. How is the old place? Have they leveled up the approach to the pump, or do the women still slip on the ice in the winter and break their legs? And does Mother Krausskopf still manufacture that delicious toffee with poppy-seeds on top? If I had known you were coming here I should have asked you to bring me some; I was always passionately fond of it. Now sit down here and we'll have a nice chat."

Calman sat down on the swelling divan to which she pointed, and as in a dream looked round the beautiful apartment, so rich, dainty, rococo. He could scarcely catch his breath; he was simply overwhelmed by this magnificent woman in her magnificent setting. He felt drab and commonplace among these environments, a smudge on a beautiful picture. It was all so unreal. Presently he would wake up and find himself back in dingy Kurnick. This glorious specimen of womanhood was surely a stranger who mistook him for some one else. What had she to do with wizened, crippled old Zelig? She could be no daughter of his, or else her first question would have been concerning him.

"Gnendel"—he began, clearing his throat.

"Or, at least — I beg your pardon. . . ."

She clapped her hands with delight. "Oh, call me that again!" she exclaimed. "I haven't heard myself called by that name for years. It makes me feel so young again!"

"Gnendel," Calman resumed soberly, "my business here is about your father."

A look of concern overspread her features. "He's not ill - or, perhaps" - She cut short the question.

"No; he is living," he reassured her.

"I knew he was well the last time I heard of him." she continued.

"The last time you heard of him!" Calman echoed wonderingly.

"I made arrangements, unknown to him of course, to have news of him about once a week. am aware that he has been living with you. I sent him those remittances so that you might not consider him a burden. I suppose you came to certain terms on the matter."

Calman made an indefinite gesture which might have meant yes or no. He was dazzled by the new light which her explanation had thrown on her attitude towards her father. So she had not forgotten the main characteristics of her race, the principal tenets of her religion. Her father was still her father to her. But there was yet one link missing in the chain — which, however, her next words supplied.

"But, of course, I could not come back," she said pensively. "What would he have said to my profession? He would have cursed me, unless — perhaps — he would have preferred to kill me. No.

no, I can never come back."

"But you must come back, Gnendel," said Calman slowly.

She opened her great eyes in wonder and per-

haps a little vexation. "I must, did you say, Herr Schwartz?"

"Your father saw you at the circus last Tuesday night."

"Wait a moment. Last Tuesday! I read somewhere that an elderly Jew had been ejected for creating a disturbance. I suppose that was my father." She saw the confirmation of her conjecture in his face and laughed bitterly. "Why, it's quite humorous," she added.

"It was a terrible shock to him," resumed Calman. "To his old-fashioned notions you were outraging all maidenly modesty by — by your professional costume. At first I thought he had lost his reason. Now it appears he has only lost his memory. His mind has been impaired in a peculiar way. All recollection of the four years which have intervened seems to have been wiped clean off his brain. He supposes you are still at Kurnick. He thinks you have never left him."

"Well?" she interjected curtly.

"And so he is asking for you incessantly. I have put him off as well as I could, but he will not be put off any longer. He had actually made up his mind to go and look for you himself. I thought it best to take that task on me instead."

"And what do you expect me to do?" There was a hard ring in her words.

"To come back and humor him in his self-deception; to pretend, as he thinks, that nothing has happened. Unless that is done he will simply waste away with impatience. Or he may get sane, and remember the truth, and then he will die more

quickly. I think you told me once," he continued after a slight pause, which she made no move to fill, "that you did not want your father's premature death on your conscience. That was the reason why you went away then. That is the reason why you must return now."

She got up and went to a little side-table, took a cigarette, and lit it. She puffed at it once or twice and threw it away. Then she paced the room with short, quick strides. Calman watched her, outwardly calm, but with an inward quaking of his heart. He felt as if he had blundered into the cage of a young lioness, and had disturbed her in her sleep. She came to a sudden halt in front of him and said:

"Do you know what you are asking of me?"

"Yes. To prolong your father's life; if not, at least to soothe his last days."

She turned away again, the same mutinous expression on her face he recollected seeing there four years ago when Zelig called her to leave the gypsy procession.

"It was very unfortunate, very unnecessary," she said at last, standing with her back to him. "Why did you bring my father here?"

He leapt up, startled and entirely thrown off his guard. Yet why should he be surprised at her intuition? Could one be surprised at anything this wizard of a woman said or did? But if she had succeeded in seeing beneath his mask, why continue to wear a mask to himself? He would be frank.

"I gave myself many reasons for coming here,"

he said; "every reason but the true one. Well, then, I brought your father here—because I wanted to see you."

"You wanted to see me!" she echoed, dwelling on each word and looking hard at him.

"Yes, I wanted to see you," he repeated, returning her gaze steadily. "It was the craving of a man who wishes to lay the ghost that haunts him. It was very rash, very imprudent of me. Punish me for it as you think fit. But — don't let your father suffer on my account."

"Yes, I will think out your punishment," she said, her manner harsh and threatening. "As for my father, I will consider that too."

"I can give you till nine o'clock this evening," he said.

"You can give me?" she cried angrily.

"The train leaves at nine. I am going back by it, with or without you. I must be back at Kurnick by to-morrow morning without fail. If you wish to accompany me, be at the station in time for the train."

Her eyes blazed at him in inarticulate anger. Nor did she have time to find speech. There were hurried steps in the antechamber, the door opened, and a man rushed in tempestuously. Calman knew him at a glance. It was the young man of the poster incident and the imperial box.

The new-comer stopped short and looked from Gnendel to Calman, and his gaze remained fixed on the latter. "Why, I'm blessed if this isn't the fellow I nearly sent spinning under your carriagewheels the other day!" he said with a laugh.

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Then he quickly stepped up to Gnendel. "What does he want here? I suppose he has found out who you are, and is molesting you for compensation. Been bruised, and all that sort of thing, eh? But I'll make short work of him.— Here, my man"—he held out a gold coin to Calman—"take this and buy yourself a plaster with it."

"Herr Schwartz has not been molesting me," said Gnendel coldly. "He is an old friend of mine."

"Oh, indeed! — I am delighted to meet you, Herr Schwartz. — Only, I had an idea — of course, I was quite mistaken — that you were quarreling as I came in. But perhaps I am de trop — am I?"

"That depends whether Herr Schwartz has anything else to say to me," replied Gnendel, looking at neither of the two men.

"No, there is nothing else," said Calman quietly, turning to go.

Gnendel rang the bell, and the housemaid appeared to show him out. There was a tightness about his throat which prevented him from uttering the merest formula of leave-taking. On looking back for a parting glance he caught just one flash of Gnendel's eyes, which told him nothing. The only thing he was sure of was that she had wanted to get rid of him. Well, he had done his best. He could do no more — except wait for nine o'clock.

"That ill-mannered friend of yours is evidently a Jew," said the young Cuirassier with a laugh.

"What of it? I am a Jewess."

"Indeed! I thought you were a gypsy."

"No; I did not start so high up in the social scale." With a gesture of utter indifference she flung herself into the nearest arm-chair.

The young man, with soft, stealthy tread, came over and knelt down by her side, taking her hand and humbly looking up at her. "But, Jewess or gypsy, you are absolutely the most wonderful woman that ever breathed," he whispered adoringly.

"Oh, yes, we know all about that," she said, tapping the floor impatiently with her foot.

He sprang up furiously, and strode over to the other end of the room. "You are in one of your moods again," he cried. "Your friend Schwartz has evidently upset you. Here I come flying to you on wings, as it were, to give you the great news . . ."

"Great news, Benko?" she asked with a mild show of interest.

He approached her again eagerly. "Yes, great indeed. I succeeded even more than I hoped. The Archduke has asked us to lunch with him at the château. The day is not quite fixed, but he is already having a special ring built in the grounds, where you are to ride to him privately. Just think what that will mean to you! You have had many triumphs, but this "—

"Yes, it's very nice. I will consider the invitation."

He gasped. "You will do what?"

"Yes; why not, mon cher? I will think it over — among other things."

He laughed with genuine heartiness. "What a fool I am, and what an actress you are! You really took me in for a moment. I know there aren't many things you hold in respect on this earth; but I presume you make an exception with archdukes, don't you? By the way, you haven't thanked me."

"I will do that when I have considered."

"Very good. Since you persist in keeping up the joke I will humor you. Besides, I am rewarded already. You are having supper with me at the Belvedere to-night, aren't you?"

"I will see if it's down in my note-book."

He repressed something which might have been an oath. "I know it's there, because I put it down myself," he said. "And if you really want to please me"—he added tenderly.

"Yes, Benko?"

"Wear your chiffon velours and put my diamond aigrette in your hair."

"I may; but you know I always leave my toilet to the inspiration of the moment."

He looked at her sideways, suspiciously almost. "You are distraite," he said.

"Perhaps I am."

"I had better go."

"Perhaps you had better."

He came close, and, taking her hand diffidently, bent low and kissed it.

She lifted her disengaged hand and lightly stroked his hair. "You are a good boy, Benko," she said almost softly.

He straightened himself, his face beaming with delight. "Then at ten o'clock, outside your dressing-room," he cried buoyantly, waving her an airy farewell.

Scarcely had the door closed behind him when she sprang up, all her abstractedness and indolence vanished. Every movement of hers showed the nervous and muscular tension of one bracing herself for a tremendous struggle. What had happened in this last hour? What had not happened? This hour was the narrow line on which both her past and her present had met, and were balancing themselves, and she had to keep them in equipoise. Compared to that, her most daring equestrian feats were mere child's-play.

She clenched her hands and set her teeth to master her inward turmoil and to compel her thoughts to a more even pace. There was no time now to quarrel with the strange chance which had placed her in this dilemma. She might be angry with Calman, but how did that help her? She knew that if it had not been through Calman the news would have reached her through her own channel of information. Her friend, the assistant police commissioner, would have sent her word in due course. Well, and what did her father's message come to? Like a beaten dog she had been driven from her home; and now, like the same beaten dog, she was to slink back at the first whistle. She was to icopardize her brilliant career by lingering for months, years perhaps, at the bedside of a whimmical old man who had never loved her. And the

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Archduke was having a special ring built for her at his château! It was really too absurd. Could she hesitate for a moment in her decision?

And yet she did hesitate. Not till it was time to dress for the performance and the subsequent supper with Benko did she become sure of herself. With defiant tread — though she did not quite know what or whom she was defying — she went to her bed-chamber. She did not immediately ring for her maid. What should she wear to-night? Why not the chiffon velours and the aigrette? If she was not going to please the old man who hated her, there was no reason why she should not please the young man who loved her.

She opened her wardrobe and cast a careless glance at its contents. Her gaze fell on a little parcel thrust away in a corner. On a sudden impulse she snatched it up and untied it. tained things strangely out of keeping with the remainder of the wardrobe: a patched-up bodice and skirt, a faded red sash, and a kerchief of the same They were the clothes in which she had left She had kept them, guarded them zeal-Kurnick. They were her talisman, her mascot. long as she had them she felt her fortunes safe. Every now and then she had taken them out and gloated over them, with heart beating high, with quick-rushing thoughts of triumph and exultation. Heavens! these were what she had started the world To-night she knew she needed their admonition more than ever. And yet, to-night, what was the matter with her eves? She was suddenly viewing everything through a blur, a mist. What in the world was this — tears?

She sat down in a chair, folding the shabby finery in her lap and again hugging it close to her breast. It was to her no longer the memento of her struggles and her successes. These patched clothes spoke to her only of one thing - her dead mother. It was her mother's deft fingers that had made them, the last work they had ever done. It was her mother's honeyed voice that had wheedled from Zelig a few of the scantv gulden for which he toiled so laboriously. Could she have forgotten it? Her mother had prayed for her, and her father had worked for her. It had broken her mother's heart to see their one remaining child going about in rags. Oh, her mother! her mother! And now that same mother was watching her Gnendel from her place in Paradise, waiting anxiously to see how this child of hers would decide the fate of her poor, maundering old Zelig. A sob shook Gnendel, another, and then her face was buried in her hands and unresistingly she allowed the flood of tears full vent. no, she would not desert her father. Let the Archduke build a ring for her if he liked; he could ride in it himself. She would go.

With trembling fingers she doffed her gown. No shimmering fabrics for her to-night; no gleaming ornaments. She slipped on the patched clothes, bound round her head the faded kerchief. As she had gone from her father, so she would go back to him. She hurried back to the sitting-room and there called the maid.

"Mademoiselle is going to a fancy dress ball?" cried the girl, astonished.

"Yes, I may have to do some masquerading," was the curt reply. Heavens, what a sensation she would create at the Belvedere if she appeared there like this!

She sat down and scribbled a letter, addressing it to the management of the Hippodrome.

"I want this sent off at nine o'clock," she said to the maid, who had watched all her movements openmouthed.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"And now I want you to lock up every door except the servants' rooms, and give me the keys. You will all remain in the flat till you hear from me again."

The girl went off to execute her orders, and Gnendel busied herself with other preparations for her journey until the maid returned with the keys. She then put on her most inconspicuous cloak, took up her satchel containing her purse, and hurried out into the street. After walking a little distance she called a cab and told the man to drive by a devious route to the station. She wished no one to spy on her. She hastened into the booking-office it was three minutes to nine — and took her ticket for Kurnick. On the platform, striding up and down with feverish steps, was Calman. changed no words as they met. He only looked at her and nodded. And then, still silent, they took their seats in the third-class compartment.

IV

The morning sun was already bright when Calman and Gnendel stepped out at Kurnick station. The long, tedious journey had not been relieved for them by any conversation. Wrapt in their thoughts, they had let the miles and hours crawl slowly away behind them. About three in the morning Gnendel woke up and found her head pillowed comfortably on Calman's shoulder. Without any comment she had withdrawn it and sat up straight. It only reminded her of her object in traveling in this hard-benched third-class carriage when she could so easily have afforded the luxury of a wagon-lit. If she wished to play her part properly she must begin to discipline herself to the conditions of the old cheerless existence.

Calman had found nothing to say to her. Questions of life and death might be a fit topic of conversation with this extraordinary woman. He had been fluent enough when he had to plead with her on a matter wherein the great human principles were involved, but mere small-talk seemed absurd. He could not even bring himself to tell her of the pretext which he had given Zelig for her absence. Petty untruths seemed utterly incompatible with the great issue upon which she was bent. A woman such as she could hardly fail to prove equal to any and every occasion without prompting.

They met nobody on the way to the house; the hour was still too early. The nature of her errand came home to Gnendel with more and more force

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as she made her way through the well-remembered places, leaving her scope for no other thoughts, and scarcely allowing her to draw breath until noiselessly the two stepped into the sick-room.

Zelig was dozing. At the first glance Calman noticed the change which had taken place in the old man's appearance during the short time he had been away. The face had become ashen gray, and beneath the tight-drawn skin the cheek-bones stood out sharp and angular. The fingers of the one hale hand were twisting and twitching restlessly on Silently Calman motioned the the counterpane. woman who had been his locum-tenens to leave the Stiffly erect, her arms folded across her breast, Gnendel took her stand against the windowledge, an unfathomable, living enigma. cowered in the wicker-chair by the bedside, his heart drumming within him fit to burst as he awaited the outcome of his daring experiment.

Presently Zelig opened his eyes, but only to the merest slits, and the heavily drooping lids concealed all trace of any emotion he might have felt at sight of his daughter. Then his mouth contracted and he said querulously: "Where's my gruel, Gnendel? You know I can't eat the hard crusts with my toothless gums."

"It shall be ready in a few moments, father," replied Gnendel; and without any more ado she emptied the bag of oatmeal into a saucepan and placed it on the spirit-lamp which Calman had lit for her.

"And while it's simmering you can black my boots. The leather is already turning white," went on Zelig.

Gnendel recognized the rasping tones in which her father used to speak to her of old. Yes, there could be no doubt of it; it was as Calman had said. His memory had leapt back across the gulf of those four years, and had stopped dead on the other side. Calman quailed as, without a word, he saw her take up Zelig's boots. He hurried into the adjoining room and brought her a brush and a box of blacking. The tragic farce must be kept up; but how long would it last, and how would it end?

No sound was heard save the simmering of the saucepan and the swishing of Gnendel's brush.

When she had finished, Zelig's voice again broke the silence. "My praying-shawl is so dirty that people look at me in the synagogue. You must wash it at once, Gnendel."

- "Where is the wash-tub?" she asked of Calman in an undertone.
 - "Gnendel!" he gasped.
- "I shall go and find it myself," she said, going towards the door.
- "Stop, Gnendel!" cried Zelig, sitting up suddenly.

Gnendel and Calman turned to him in astonishment at the change in his voice. It was no longer the voice of a dotard, but of a man whose thoughts ran clear and strong.

"Yes, Calman, you are right; there's no need to go on with this play-acting," rasped the old man. "It's not you that have fooled me, but I who have made a fool of you. Oh, how I laughed that you, the shrewd man of business, could be hoodwinked so easily! Yes, I laughed."



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"What do you mean, Zelig?" queried Calman, flushing and growing pale by turns.

"That I made you my cat's-paw — I, half-witted You went to Vienna on business? God old Zelig. told me otherwise. I knew why you went. you take me to the circus because I knew who was the woman with the horses long before you did. God again told me. And then I went mad. knew when I was mad and when I was sane. quite sane now, I tell you. Gnendel had gone to Cracow to sell my scrolls — my Gnendel did that? And then I sent you for her. I knew well enough that you would go to her in the unholy places where she wallowed, and that by every device of your tongue and mind you would drag her back here."

"Why did you want to drag me back here,

father?" Gnendel interposed quietly.

"Why? Because I had something to say to you, my child, before I died. I had to tell you that you have shamed me before men and before God. should have kept knocking at my coffin-lid if these words of mine had remained unspoken."

"Have you anything else to say, father?" she

asked, with no change of mien or tone.

"Nothing to you, my child. The rest I shall say to your mother and your sister when I meet them. I shall be able to tell them that their Gnendel is making a livelihood by showing herself before the lewd eyes of men, by drawing upon her body the evil desires of their hearts. Your brother, too, who died doing his duty to his king, as commanded by our sages, he also will be glad to have such joyous news of his sister. But, oh, my child"—the strained voice broke into a whimper —"I shall pray God He should account it to you for a redeeming merit that you came back in time to hear my —"

"Oh, not your curse, father!" came passionately from Gnendel.

There was no answer from Zelig. Clutching wildly at the air, he fell back upon the pillow, a film of white foam covering his blue lips. At the same time, with an ominous hissing, the saucepan boiled over, quenching the spirit-lamp.

Dissembling his fear, Calman bent down and listened intently for a little while; then he turned to Gnendel and said gently:

"I don't think he will need any more gruel."

Gnendel drew a deep breath. "He died so that I might escape his curse," she murmured, gazing stonily in front of her. "But I killed him after all."

He gripped her by the arm and drew her into the next room, where, after murmuring a few words such as he thought the occasion demanded, but which she evidently did not grasp, he left her to her own company.

The first intelligence which at last filtered through her dazed mind was when, some time later, she heard through the thin walls the sounds of hushed voices and footsteps, and all the subdued commotion which are the tribute to the august presence of death. Still later Calman brought her some food, which she left untasted. There she sat, trying to think, and only tortured by the emptiness of the effort. Sometimes she felt as though her

brain were harnessed to the team of fiery grays she was accustomed to drive in the ring, and they were all pulling in different directions.

After nightfall the hushed commotion began again in the death-chamber. Something was being brought in and set with a hollow thud on the floor. She knew that all the rites and usages for the decent decking of the dead were being carried out. that Calman came again into the room and asked her if she wished to take a last look at her father. She rose at once and followed him. Yes, her father as she saw him now was worth looking at. It was no longer the grim, discontented face she had known. It was a face on which the assurance of peace was written large and clear. The half-smiling mouth gave no token of reproach or accusation. No; why should it? Its sting was gone; the poison rankled elsewhere.

They buried him next day. Gnendel, according to the custom of her people, did not follow the funeral. She remained behind, seated on the mourner's stool, indifferent to and unconscious of all that went on around her. Neighbors and gossips had flocked into the room, ostensibly for the pious purpose of comforting her, but really in order to satisfy their curiosity over Zelig's runaway daughter, who had strangely come back just in time to see him die.

Evidently she did not take it much to heart, for she had not shed a tear. Nor would it appear that things had gone very prosperously with her out in the world, for she had returned with nothing but the clothes she had to her back when she left. What a warning her fate should be to all disobedient children! And now, no doubt, she intended to quarter herself on that good-natured fool of a Calman, the shameless thing! She thought she could take advantage of him as that cunning old father of hers had done. But it should not happen; if all the women in Kurnick had to band themselves together and appeal to the Government, or even to the wonder-working Rabbi of Saddogorra himself, such a scandal would not be tolerated. A girl with such flashing eyes — they flashed more than ever; did you notice it, my dear? — was a danger to the place. And Calman had to be protected against himself. Now that he had got rid of Zelig's malign influence he would probably prove more tractable to the marriage-mongers. As for Gnendel, she would be allowed to stay out the seven days of mourning, and then away with her, back to the beggars and vagrants with whom she had been consorting.

Late that same day, however, something occurred which put quite a different complexion on the conjectures as to Gnendel's doings and social status during her disappearance. Half-a-dozen gossips were keeping her company, when suddenly the rattling of spurs and the clatter of a saber were heard in the passage without. The door opened, and Calman entered, followed by a splendid young man in an officer's uniform. Ah, quite so! Gnendel had done something, and now the police had traced her, and would take her off to prison. But the officer's behavior soon knocked that theory on the head. With a cry of joy he sprang forward,

plumped down on his knee, and, utterly disregarding those present, snatched up her hand and covered it with passionate kisses.

"Come away; he wants to be left alone with her," said Calman to the gossips, a strained look on his face and a hard ring in his voice, and setting the others an example by going towards the door.

The room cleared as if by magic. It was unwise to trifle with a man in an officer's uniform, although he demeaned himself by being in love with a Gnendel.

"So you found me out, Benko! That was very clever of you, Benko," said Gnendel, with a little laugh, and yet with slightly wrinkled brows.

"Your maid told me that some one had come for you from Kurnick. I hurried here and asked for Herr Schwartz," he replied eagerly. "Oh, why did you not tell me? Why did you not confide in me?"

"Because I preferred to keep my own counsel,"

she said, shrugging her shoulders.

- "But what does it matter so long as I have found you again?" he exclaimed joyously. "You did give me a fright, though! And, oh, the havoc you left behind! The Hippodrome directors are in despair; they are scouring the country for you; they say they must have you back by hook or by crook. Are you ready to come back with me now?"
 - "No, I'm not quite ready, Benko."
- "Then I shall wait for you till you are. I'm not going to lose sight of you again."

She shook her head, but said nothing.

"Oh yes, yes," he said importunately, "you must

be back to-morrow morning. Listen, dearest. We are to lunch with the Archduke the day after to-morrow — much sooner than I expected. Isn't it glorious?"

She had closed her eyes. Was it to avoid his ardent gaze, or was she looking at things that could not be seen with the mere physical vision?

"But did you hear me — did you hear what I said?" he cried, puzzled by her silence.

"I heard, Benko."

"Ah! no wonder you are overwhelmed." He looked round him exultantly. "So this is where you come from," he continued. "You are even a greater miracle than I guessed you to be. From the hovel to the palace! And now I have something else to say — much greater news still." tone sank to an endearing whisper. "There is hope for us now, dearest one. I think this will solve our difficulty; I was thinking of it coming along in the train. The Archduke is my friend. With his influence you may be received at Court. And then — and then my father could no longer object. Oh. don't think ill of him; he can't forget that the blood of the Poniatowskis flows in his Dearest, dearest, will you love me a little when you are my wife? Oh, speak, speak! Don't torture me so!"

"Benko, I can't give you any answer now."

"No, no, of course not. How can I expect it? Your father died only yesterday, as I have just heard. You are upset, unstrung. I shall wait. Perhaps there may be a decent hotel in this place. If not, I shall sleep in the fields."

"But you must not stay here in Kurnick. You must go back at once."

He looked at her suspiciously. "I don't know what you mean," he began.

"I don't know myself. But do as I tell you."

"Then I suppose I must," he said with a sigh of resignation.

"Good boy, Benko!"

"Oh, don't say that," he burst out; "it almost sounds like 'good dog.'"

"There are hundreds of men who would have been satisfied even with that," she said in a matterof-fact way which robbed the remark of any tinge of vanity.

"I know," was the sullen reply.

"And now I want you to promise me something, Benko."

"Promise you — what?" he asked cautiously.

"To tell no one where I am to be found — not till I choose to come from my hiding-place of my own accord."

"Oh, I'll keep quiet enough," he assured her with alacrity. "Do you think I want the others to come buzzing round you when I have to stay away? And when you come back — well, it'll be only another one of Flamme Noire's escapades. You know people forgive you everything. And the Archduke on top of it! What an advertisement! The very pavement stones will talk of you."

"They may, Benko — they may."

"Can I stay a little now, eh?" he asked with childish wistfulness. He was, after all, little more than a boy.

"No; you must leave Kurnick at once, as I have said," she replied firmly. "If there is no train due get a horse to the next station, and let the train catch you up there." Her hand went to her throat as though she were struggling with her breath.

"You - you frighten me," he said.

"I am a little bit frightened myself, Benko," she said with a queer laugh. "But I shall be all right again presently. Now go, please."

"I'll send you a reminder about the Archduke

to-morrow," he said.

"It's unnecessary, Benko."

"I should think it was." He laughed heartily, his assurance fully restored.

She held out her hand, and he snatched it hungrily to his lips; then, with a stiff military salute, he clattered out of the room.

"Good boy! good boy!" Gnendel murmured to herself, her lips moving automatically. The words seemed the mechanical refrain to some forgotten song. They might have applied to anything and anybody — not merely to Benko. Of Benko it was only necessary to remember that he had obtained for her the favor of an archduke, and that through him she, the daughter of a poor Jewish scribe, might marry into a princely family. Benko's father would be got to give his consent. There was only one little hitch in it all: how was she going to obtain her own father's consent?

Perhaps Calman could help her to that. Calman had engineered this whole business; he was a wise and shrewd young man; although he had allowed himself to be taken in by an old dotard. She would ask him at once. She would call him. No, on second thoughts she would not. She was rather curious to see how he would behave under the anomalous and difficult circumstances which had brought her to accept his hospitality for — to him at least — an indefinite time. But was it less indefinite to her? She had certain data to go by. If she wished to pay the proper tribute of respect to her father's memory, as enjoined by her faith, she must stay here for the seven days of mourning, sitting idle and inactive, and refraining from everything that pertained to her usual occupation.

Seven days! And meanwhile Benko was waiting, the Archduke was waiting, the whole world was waiting for her. It was ridiculous. Of what avail was all the knowledge she had gained during those broad, adventurous years, the enlargement of her spirit, the clarifying of her reason, if she could not now shake herself free of the trammels of these old-world, time-worn superstitions? No one could say that she had not done her best to redeem her fault, whatever that fault might have been. had done what she had been asked to do. hurried to her father's deathbed regardless of all consequences. She had found it not a sanctuary where she might expiate her trespass, but a trap in which her conscience was to be snared. And it was only by the merest accident that they had not suc-Well, they could take to themselves for it whatever credit they liked. She herself had not come off so badly either in the deal. They might take from her her peace of mind, her chance of atonement, but they could not rob her of Benko and the Archduke.

She did not see Calman again till he came to tell her that supper was ready. He did not look at her as he spoke. His eyes were on the ground. Oh, what a difference from her bold-faced, highspirited young Cuirassier!

"I am leaving here to-morrow morning," she said to him, after having curtly refused his invitation to the meal.

"Quite so," he replied, nodding in a matter-of-fact way.

"I am glad my arrangements meet your views," she said with somewhat superfluous sarcasm.

"Why shouldn't they?" he asked, quite unmoved. "They give me all the time I require for saying to you what I have to say — with your permission, of course," he added with an ungainly bow.

"What! you have something to say to me, Herr Schwartz?"

"I want to ask your pardon for all the annoyance I have caused you. It was quite unintentional."

"That goes without saying."

"It might have gone without doing. All my other failures should have warned me that they could only culminate in a great flasco."

"Oh, there you are quite wrong, Herr Schwartz. The fiasco was by no means a foregone conclusion. You see, there is the law of contraries, if you know what I mean by that. At any rate, you deserve every credit for your perseverance."

He would have given years of his life to know how much of irony there was in her words. From her face he could gather nothing. It was a mask.

"Still," she continued lightly, "if you really think you have done me an injury, and insist on making me reparation, you might do it by helping me out of a quandary."

"Willingly."

"I want you to help me to conjecture what my father would have said if old Prince Poniatowski had come to him and begged of him to do him the honor of allowing me to marry his son."

He was quite prepared for such a question. He was prepared for it when Benko came into his shop and asked him where he could find Mademoiselle Flamme Noire. Smart young cavalry officers did not lose their way into Kurnick without very good reason for it.

"What your father would have said to your marrying a Gentile?" he repeated significantly.

"Yes, a Gentile — even a prince," she prompted him impatiently.

"I think your father would not have said more — than he did not say."

She bit her lip meditatively. "I see," she said finally. "You put it very well—quite delicately, in fact. You are cleverer than I thought. I am surprised you made all those mistakes."

A wave of anger drove the blood to his face. Why should he stand here and allow himself to be tormented by this creature without a heart? She should see she was presuming too much on her power. He would make an end of it.

"Before you go, there is just one small matter of business I wish to settle with you," he said coldly.

"A matter of business? Oh, the funeral expenses?"

"Not at all. I have to give you something which belonged to your father. One moment, please." He dived into his coat and drew out a leather pocket-book. From it he took some papers. She watched him curiously. "Here are the vouchers for all the remittances you sent him, and which I saved up for him at the bank — twelve hundred and fifty gulden. I should think there must be another sixty gulden or so for interest. Take it. The money is twice your own, once because you have earned it, and again because you inherit it."

"Why didn't you put it to the use for which I intended it?" she asked, stepping a pace or two away from him.

"Because his care and maintenance were to me a labor of love, and I could easily afford it."

"You mean you don't like keeping money which was earned by — by drawing upon one's person the evil desires of men."

"That seems to have been your father's view," he said quietly.

"But not yours? Oh, how brave and pious of you to tell lies through a dead man's mouth!"

She flung the words at him in a positive transport of fury. He looked nonplussed at her. This was very strange. Since when had he acquired the power of making her angry? She might mock him. Yes, that was natural. But upbraid him? He felt

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himself growing taller. A sudden sense of masterfulness came over him. It gave him the courage, which otherwise he never would have gained, of doing the boldest deed he had ever done in his life. Yes, why should he not, at the eleventh hour, strike at least one blow for himself?

"There is only one other thing," he said; but for all his vaunted courage his voice shook perceptibly.

"What! only one other thing?" she echoed, having apparently regained her self-possession.

"I thought you might like to take away with you some memento of your father."

"Yes, I should," she said instantly. "I shall pick out something from his belongings."

He drew himself up and looked straight into her eyes.

"If I were sure you would not misunderstand my meaning I would make a suggestion."

"Oh, don't trouble about that, Herr Schwartz," she said almost flippantly; "the time for misunderstandings between us has passed. We speak too openly to each other. Now, what do you suggest I should choose?"

He quickly stepped over to a little iron safe in the corner of the room, unlocked it, and took from it a folded document. He came back and held it out to her.

"Perhaps you will like this. It's the last thing your father's hand ever penned. He became paralyzed two or three days later."

She had snatched it from him, and was examining it. She had not been taught the cursive Hebrew letters in which it was written, and therefore could

not read it. And yet it seemed to her as if she ought to know what it said. "Will you read it for me?" she asked.

"There's no need to do that. It's simply the betrothal contract between you and me which he wrote the day you went away. It had fluttered to the ground unnoticed, and I took the liberty of appropriating it."

For a few moments she toyed with the paper, holding in with both hands. Every instant he expected she would tear it across. But she did not tear it. She folded it up again, looking at him calmly with her large, fathomless eyes.

"So you think I should take this, Herr Schwartz? It's curious. The clothes in which I came here are my mother's last handiwork, and this — Very well. I am much obliged to you for your suggestion." She paused and allowed a smile to flit across her lips. "But, really, Herr Schwartz, you are developing all sorts of unsuspected attributes. Now, would anybody have ever taken you for a humorist?"

He scowled, not so much with anger against her as against himself for the feeling of vanquishment which had come over him. What, indeed, was the good of fighting her? She always got the better.

"Shall I send your supper in here?" was all he could say as he turned to leave the room.

"Pray, don't trouble, Herr Schwartz. You see this bowl of milk and bread is still untouched. I sha'n't need anything else to-night."

Once alone again she looked at her watch. It was half-past nine — rather later than she thought

— just about the time, to the minute almost, when she should have made her appearance in the ring at the Hippodrome. How far off and shadowy it all seemed, as if it had never been! The lamp on the table flared with a wan, ghost-like flame. Gradually all the noises without hushed one by one as the little town settled itself down to sleep.

Gnendel, stretched on the makeshift bed into which the sofa had been converted for her, wondered when she would fall asleep. Upon her was a paradoxic feeling of apathy and restlessness. She wished that one of her beautiful grays were champing outside, ready saddled for a furious gallop across the darkened fields, and yet it seemed to her that her fingers had lost the strength to manipulate the reins. They were only just strong enough to hold — What was it they were clutching so tightly? Oh, how stupid of her! She was still retaining the paper Calman had given her, the last manuscript on which her father had exercised the skill which had brought him so little joy and profit.

She wondered how her life would have shaped if she had allowed herself to be bound by this contract. Perhaps it was due to the hushed quietude and homeliness of her surroundings, but the idea did not seem to her so very repugnant. Her heart suddenly felt empty and chill. It was as though a great fire, hollow and undermined by long burning, had all at once settled down into cold gray ashes. Yes, her spirit had flamed with a fierce blaze for four years, which seemed four centuries. Was it possible it had burned itself dead?

No, not quite dead, for among the dun cinders one spark gleamed brightly; but only just one spark, and therefore she must husband it, cherish it, fan it into some great significance. What should it mean to her: Benko, her ambition, her future? No: all these seemed insufficient. What, then — what else was left in her life, into which she might construe it? Ah, she had it! It should mean to her the desire to do something by which she would please her father. The thought was no accident, not even an inspiration. It was the inevitable upshot of the sequence of ideas which had burrowed their way through her mind from the moment she had stepped into her father's death-That was the secret undertone to which chamber. her whole soul had vibrated ever since. brought that strange note of discord and hesitation into her talk with Benko, had made her irresolute and difficult, and like to one groping the way blindly along tortuous paths. But now she could walk straight, her goal was fair in view.

The loyalty she had not shown her father in life she must show him in death. The desire waxed into a passionate craving. That, and something else — which had not yet shaped itself quite so clearly — goaded her up from her couch. It was long past midnight now. The sky was paling in the east. Through the thin partition wall came to her the snore of the old woman whom Calman had installed as chaperon in the house. It reminded her of her father's labored breathing the night she had run away. From all sides her father called to her. She was glad the looking-glass was overhung with

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the white linen sheet, as was customary in a house of mourning, else she was sure it would have mirrored back on her not her own pallid countenance but the shriveled old face which only smiled when death would no longer let it frown.

She began to understand. That was why her father had died so quickly. He knew he would wield greater power over her dead than living. She shivered. Something icy cold seemed passing Surely that was her father's palacross her heart. sied hand. Then the touch became warmer, softer, It melted the glacial surface of more caressing. her soul; it loosened the frozen fountains of her eves. But she speedily checked her tears. were too dangerous. One never knew what they might wash away - perhaps the better part of one's self. Who could tell?

She threw herself on the bed and fell into a troubled sleep. She could not have slept long, for when she woke the morning was quite young yet, and the thread of her thoughts showed no break anywhere. It was still her father who dominated her mind. No; if anything, he had become more paramount. The daylight showed her her course stretching more clearly before her.

Then came the first sounds of the waking world to claim her attention. From the courtyard below uprose indications of much bustle and commotion. She stepped to the window to find out the cause of it. She saw half-a-dozen men unloading a huge dray. Among them was Calman in his shirt-sleeves. He had just shouldered a large case of pottery and was carrying it indoors. The pros-

perous merchant working like one of his hired navvies, instead of standing by with his hands in his pockets, as he well might, and idly superintending the others! What was there in the spectacle that it should touch her so to the quick?

That heavy case of goods personified to her the determined attempt of a strong man to crush down his heart-ache. That she had made his heart ache. that she still made it ache, was plain enough to her from the love he had lavished on her helpless father, from the flimsy, ungrounded hope which had driven him in search of her. And most of all from this paper, which he had treasured all these years, and now had given up to her as the most precious keepsake he could think of her taking along with her. A strong man indeed! One of the men who did the world's work, and did it well; one of the men who counted, a solid unit of the rank and file, not a mere inflated figurehead. It was good to ask favors of such a man. And she had to ask him the greatest favor of all: to help her in her desperate desire to win from her dead father the grace she could never achieve in his lifetime.

She remained at the window, seeking to attract his gaze. But he did not look up, although he surely must have known she was there. Much better so. Before such self-respect it was easy to humble one's self.

"Herr Schwartz!" she called to him.

He came at once. Before entering the room he had put his coat on, just as Benko would have done. "There is a train at midday," he informed her without waiting for her to speak.

"Thank you." Her quiet tone made him look sharply at her.

"Are you ill?" he asked.

"I have had a rather restless night."

"Oh, you will be able to sleep in the train."

"I am not sure that I shall go by this train."

"No? There is no other till midnight."

She made a sound that was suspiciously like the swallowing of a sob. "It will depend on you whether I go at all."

He gave a forced laugh. "I see; now it's your turn to be witty," he said.

She shook her head vehemently. "I am not jesting. I swear it. I don't want to go back to the circus. Answer me, Calman, do you want this contract to hold good between us?"

He fell back before the paper she held out to him as before the sharp point of a dagger. Now he was on the alert again. So she had not finished with him yet! She did not want to go back to the circus? His thoughts reverted to the tremendous scene in which she had been the principal figure. To forgo such triumphs, to step down from such heights to the groundlings—if that was what she meant—

"It would be more than human," he said at last in answer to his own thoughts.

"It is more than human," she replied brokenly.

"It is no earthly consideration that has brought me to this resolve. My fate is now in hands which have more than mortal powers. Oh, Calman! I have thought it all out thoroughly in the long, lonely hours I have spent in this room. My

father's curse was unspoken in life, but it still tarries on his dead lips. The hammer is suspended in mid-air. The moment I go back to the old life it will come crashing down on me. I can see him watching me pityingly with those grim eyes of his, waiting for what he knows is going to happen. And I am still so young, Calman, I don't want to die yet. I dare not ride any more. I know the next time I drive my team through the ring I shall fall, and the horses will batter my brains out with their hoofs. And I am still so young! I don't want to die yet!"

Her words had given him time to recover himself. "This is only a mood of yours; it will pass," he said gently.

"No, Calman, it will not pass. My cowardice has become too deeply ingrained in my soul."

He was silent for a few moments. Then he said almost brusquely:

"Is that quite fair to me? You want to marry me because you are afraid?"

"Oh, don't think of it in that way!" she entreated him. "There is in this more than fear. Have I not played with my life each time I made my bow to the shouts of the applauding mob? And I will do it again if you force me to it, Calman. I can die, but that will not set me right with my father, or with God, will it? No, Calman; I want to live, because I'm not yet fit to face my father. The only one that can make me fit is you. And knowing the hard task I set you, shall I not do my best to make it easier for you? This fear of mine may turn to anything; you can make it what you

like. The root of it is love; why should not the flower of it be love? Only tie me to you, hold me fast, guard me against myself. Oh! don't refuse. You gave me the right to speak to you like this."

"Yes, I brought you back here," he said with a break in his voice.

"No, that's not the reason. Do you remember you asked me to think out a punishment for you?"

"A punishment?" he stammered.

"Yes. What greater punishment can there be for a man than to marry a woman who killed her own father?"

He stepped close to her, all his soul in his eyes, and scrutinized her face in silence.

With quick intuition she put her hand to her heart. There was a faint blush in her cheeks. "I know what you are asking," she whispered. "Thank you for not putting your question into words. You shall have a straight answer, Calman. I have been tempted more than falls to the lot of most women; but I have not forgotten that I am a daughter of Israel. Are you content?"

And his trembling lips, as they sought hers, made eloquent reply.

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HERE they go — the Urim and Thumim," some one had said in jest, and Urim and Thumim the two were called from that day on.

It was a subtle tribute to the inseparableness of the pair, as well as a patent sarcasm on their ragged and out-at-elbows appearance, which was anything but reminiscent of the sacerdotal regalia of the splendid old Temple days. Which of the two was Urim and which Thumim was not quite established. But they both accepted the sobriquet with the humble equanimity of people who, living on the bread of charity, have learned not to be squeamish about the nature of any gift.

Urim and Thumim had fallen in somewhere on their mendicant rounds and, after a night spent in fierce Talmudical wranglings, had decided to go into partnership. Somehow it pleased their vanity, or rather their self-respect, to beg in company. From each being just an ordinary beggar, they assumed the dignity of an itinerant firm, and once they mooted even the idea of having regular business cards printed on which they would style themselves: "Collectors of Alms."

For many years they had carried on their peregrinations, until the growing infirmities of age had compelled them to settle down in a prosperous little town as permanent local pensioners. How old they actually were was lost even to themselves in the mists of antiquity, but, calculating their years from some vague point anterior to the Revolution, as they called the great Polish insurrection of '63, they came to the conclusion that they had well passed the appointed span of man's life.

The question had become a matter of great importance to them. It exercised their minds almost day and night. They would allude to it mystically,

cryptically.

"It's time we put on a little more speed," Urim would say.

"Yes, we ought to start away very soon if we want to pick out a good place," Thumim would cap the other's remark.

And then they would look at each other significantly, and voice the same thought in the same breath, or rather want of breath, for they had both become rather wheezy and asthmatical.

"Let's see how much we've got."

And then a long leather pouch would make its appearance from some hiding-place, and out of it they would jingle the coins it contained on to the table and commence to count. The last time they had counted they had looked at each other rather longer and had shaken their heads more despondingly.

"Fourteen roubles and fifty-seven copecks—that's not enough by a long way," they informed

one another.

Some folks might have felt angry with Urim and

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Thumim for being greedy. To have paid their way through life for seventy odd years, and at the end of that time still to have a surplus of fourteen and a half roubles and seven copecks, was surely as much as reasonable men could expect.

What were they hoarding up for? With the money already accumulated they could have bought many necessities, and even a few luxuries — Urim needed a new pair of phylacteries badly. Nor were they obsessed by any false pride in the matter of providing against a pauper burial. They had given their brethren a chance of earning the blessings of heaven by caring for them in life, and they would not grudge them the still greater favor of allowing them to give them a charity funeral. What need, then, in Heaven's name, did Urim and Thumim have of money?

They knew that to have voiced the ambition that consumed them would have exposed them to endless ridicule. And that ambition, since the secret must be told, was nothing less than — to die and be buried in Jerusalem!

That this was not beyond the bounds of human possibility they knew. They had it on good authority that Jews died in Jerusalem every day. But these had taken the precaution first to get there. Without being very strong on the subject of geography, Urim and Thumim were aware that it was rather too far to get from Slobotkin to Palestine on foot, apart from the fact that some incidental swimming would have to be done.

At their present rate of saving it meant they would have to live about another century and a

half to amass the necessary traveling expenses, and that was rather a long time to wait. They had done so much waiting and watching and praying in their time — one can have even too much of the good things of life. There was but one thing to hope for — a miracle.

And true enough, as a reward for their faith, a miracle did happen. But, seemingly, as though to warn people not to put all their burden on God. it was only half a miracle. That is to say, the very morning after their last stocktaking, the traveling expenses arrived—for one of them. Many years ago a nephew of Thumim had emigrated to America. He had kept in touch with his uncle by sending him an occasional dollar, which sometimes reached its destination and sometimes got mislaid at the post office. But the fifty dollars the nephew had sent as a thank-offering for having won a big prize in the lottery, appeared to have been under the special supervision of Providence, which sometimes outwits even Russian officialdom.

Urim happened to be out when the letter arrived, and he found Thumim awaiting his return in an agony of perplexity. Urim swallowed hard on being informed of the godsend.

"Well, what are you troubling about now?" he asked Thumim harshly.

"I'm troubling because it's not enough," replied Thumim.

"But the agent said that for a hundred roubles he could get a man to Palestine. Fifty dollars just make that, don't they?"

Thumim got red with exasperation.

"Yes, but don't you see how many of us there are? Can't you count up to two?"

"Then only one will go — the one the money be-

longs to," said Urim firmly.

"What, and leave you behind? Never. I shall stay as well."

Urim threw up his hands in horror.

"And saddle me with the iniquity of having kept a Jew from going to the Holy Land when he had the chance? Impious one — do you want to cut me off from the Life-to-come?"

And at last by the employment of many more threats, arguments, and cajolings, Urim drove the only all-too-willing horse to the water. Or rather, Thumim betook himself to the passage broker to arrange about his journey. He came back with a face full of woe.

"What's the matter now?" asked Urim.

"The agent says a hundred roubles is not enough."

"How much more does he want?"

"He says the fare will come to a hundred and fourteen roubles and fifty-seven copecks. I happened to mention—"

"Of course, I guessed you would brag about your wealth. Then what are you whining about? You've got the rest of the money."

"But I haven't. Half of the rest is yours, isn't it? I've already been cudgeling my brains how to divide that odd copeck."

With great deliberation Urim closed the Talmudical tome over which he had been poring, and gazed hard at the other.

- "If the other half is mine, I can do with it what I like, eh?"
 - "Of course, you can."
 - "Then, I presume, I can give it to you."
 - "God forbid!" said Thumim quickly.
- "Not so fast, my friend. Don't for a moment imagine I intend it as a gift. I'm not so generous. I want you to invest it for me in Palestinian land. Lord-of-the-World! Haven't we become grand people? Now we're even talking of investments!"
- "I really don't understand you," said Thumim, puzzled.
- "Oh, don't be so stupid!" cried Urim impatiently. "I want you, when you get there, to buy me a portion of the Holy Land. And as I may not be able to go there to take possession of my claim, I'll ask you to be so good as to pack it up in a box and send it to me here."

A light dawned on Thumim.

- "Oh, I see, you want to have some Palestinian soil so that, over a hundred and twenty years, it may be put into your coffin."
- "Really, how did you get at that so quickly?" queried Urim sarcastically.
- "But but I could have let you have it for nothing," quavered Thumim.
- "And if I don't pay you for it, how are you going to make up the rest of your passage money?"
- "But seven and a quarter roubles for a few handfuls of earth! I tell you it's too much," persisted Thumim.

"Too much?" cried Urim passionately. "Seven and a quarter miserable roubles too much for a portion of the precious earth that has trembled to the trumpet-call of the Seraphim on Sinai, that has seen the smoke of our holy sacrifices curl to heaven, that has been hallowed by the foot-steps of our kings and prophets? Oh, heretic — oh, unrighteous one! My cheeks burn with shame for you! Only — there's a condition."

"Yes, yes?" Thumim asked eagerly.

"You must pay the postage on the parcel. That's in the bargain."

And then Thumim lifted up his hands to heaven and improvised a new benediction:

"Blessed be Thou, O Lord, our God, who hast given me this man for a brother!"

In a day or two Thumim was ready for the journey. Of course it did not take him all that time to do his packing, but he lingered and lingered, waiting, perhaps, for the other half of the miracle also to happen.

And then Urim himself grew impatient and stirred the laggard to departure. A short sharp wrench was better than this slow, gradual tugging at the heart-strings. Of course, the story had got about, and a number of the townspeople gave Thumim their escort a little way, with sly nods and whisperings to one another. They had not the least doubt that the whole thing was a hoax, a conspiracy between the two old scaramouches to make a more systematic onslaught on their patrons' pockets. And even if it wasn't, Thumim would presently get frightened at his adventure and come

slinking back from the first station at which the train stopped.

But Urim, naturally, knew better. He knew Thumim would not turn back. The townspeople at last dropped behind and left the two to pursue their way to the railroad junction alone. There was no talking between them because the ungreased, creaking axle of the draycart that carried them made conversation difficult and because they preferred to listen to their own and each other's thoughts. It was not till Thumim stood looking out from the window of the fourth-class $coup\acute{e}$ that Urim broke the silence.

"When you get there, give my kind regards to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our fathers of blessed memory," he said.

"To be sure, I will," Thumim promised him gravely.

"And take plenty of the milk and honey that's there—then you'll live for ever," continued Urim, losing sight of the fact that, by acting up to his advice and its promised result, Thumim would be defeating the very object of his journey.

And as the train started moving, Urim called after his friend:

"And above all don't forget my investment!"

And then he quickly turned to make his way to the vehicle that was to take him back to Slobotkin. But no vehicle and no driver were to be seen. The rascal, having received his fare in advance, had made off to a neighboring farm, where he knew a load of hay was waiting to be taken to the town, and the bottle of vodka he would receive in return was better company than an old Jew any day.

Urim did not mind. He was unconscious of his aching feet, of the pangs of hunger and thirst during that six hours' tramp over the stony road. For the new-born hope within him buoyed him up and made his heart soar heaven-high.

It gave him rather a shock, when at length he stumbled back into his miserable dwelling, to see Thumim seated at the table, gazing at him with those rheumy, melancholy eyes of his that seemed for ever to be asking unanswerable questions. Just like Thumim's customary perversity. By now he should be speeding on towards the land that was full of God's own revelation, and instead he preferred to sit here in their wretched hovel, asking his everlasting riddles, wrapping himself in shadows when he could have all the light he wanted. fool — he had forgotten to take his spirit along with him. And the great tears rolled slowly from Urim's eyes, for never before had he had such a convincing proof of the mighty love his comrade had cherished for him.

A week, two weeks went by, and, according to Urim's reckoning, Thumim should by now have reached his destination. It was only fair to allow him a little breathing-space before he attended to his commission. No doubt there was much to see, much to rejoice and to weep over. Urim pictured him standing on the shores of the Red Sea, trying to trace the foot-prints of the Israelitish host in the sand. He imagined him scouring the cave of



Machpelah for a chance encounter with Father Abraham. Perhaps by now he had gazed at the very spot from where Elijah had started his fiery journey heavenward.

And then came the Fast of Ab, and while Urim was rocking himself sorrowfully on the loam flooring of his little Bethel, he thought of Thumim reveling in an ecstasy of grief amid the ruin-heaps of the Temple, or pressing impassioned kisses on the Wailing Wall, where it still showed the dents made by the catapults of the heathen. Oh, what a glorious time Thumim must be having, and Urim's imagination ran riotously over events and places. But envy? Heaven forbid — not a trace of it.

However, when six weeks had elapsed, Urim thought that he might allow himself to get a trifle impatient. Perhaps Thumim was a little dilatory. The consignment of holy earth should have arrived by now. And as day followed day without tidings, Urim became anxious. Waiting took the very marrow out of one's bones. And he did not feel very strong as it was, not since the day of that six-hours' tramp.

More and more frequently came those twinges in his head, the racking cramp at his heart. The visions multiplied. Old friends, whose very names he had forgotten, crowded in on him. Thumim came often, his eyes ever questioning, always hungry for answers. Each day Urim crawled to the post office, only to be met with a curt shake of the head by the official.

And then his anxiety turned to alarm, his alarm to despair. Would he be able to hold out long enough? A faint tinge of doubt, of misgiving began to insinuate itself among his other emotions. Had Thumim proved false to his trust? Had he betrayed him, having gained everything human heart could desire, and therefore grown callous to the pangs of others who went lacking?

An impotent rage seized upon him. People shrugged their shoulders as they passed him in the streets, gesticulating wildly and fiercely upbraiding his recreant friend. He would die, he would be buried, with no handful of consecrated earth to hallow his resting-place. He would have to burrow his way, according to the beliefs and traditions of his kind, through the bowels of the earth until he arrived in the Promised Land, there to await the Resurrection of the Dead. . . . Not to speak of the seven and a quarter roubles he had thrown away,— a treasure, a very fortune. . . .

The first of the Penitential Days had come. Urim was at home, for he had no longer the strength to go to the Synagogue. He was adding to the iniquities of the past year by giving no thought to his transgressions—he was making no attempt to obtain pardon by abject recantations. All he did was to brood over Thumim's treachery. He had not yet come to the stage of cursing him,—he would wait for that till the Holy Days arrived, so as to give Thumim a chance of nullifying those imprecations by his own prayers for forgiveness.

. . And then he suddenly heard heavy footsteps

stumbling up the stairs, and he sat up on his pallet, for the postman had come in panting under the load of a heavy wooden box.

"There it is," said the man, dropping it to the ground with a smothered oath and ostentatiously wiping his forehead. "What's it for—growing potatoes? Anybody would have thought it was a load of gold you were expecting, from the way you pestered the life out of us. Ah, but who can make out the crooked mind of a Jew?"

And he closed the door behind him with a bang. But if he had stayed and had seen Urim precipitate himself on the parcel and kiss it with rapturous reverence, it would have furnished him with food for reflection on the vagaries of Jewish psychology for the rest of his life.

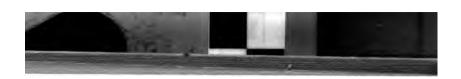
Three days later Urim, having nothing else to live for, died and was buried, and the contents of the wooden box were sprinkled over his mortal remains, all of it except the furtive few grains which each of his self-constituted mourners kept back. Who knew how soon one would need them for himself?

And on the same day, almost to the very hour, Thumim was put to rest in Jerusalem. In the streets of the city had been found the body of a nameless old man, who had arrived there some weeks ago, possessed of nothing save the clothes he wore. He had died of exposure and starvation, for the few sous, that were doled out to him as his share of the poor-box, he had hoarded up to defray the carriage of a parcel he had to send to Russia, in

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accordance with the terms of some mysterious bargain he was understood to have made.

And so Thumim had gone to the Holy Land, but the Holy Land had come to Urim. Which was the more fortunate?



THE RIOTS

of the White Eagle, Imperial District Councilor, sub-Prefect for the Charkov Government, was seated at breakfast. The Count was at no time insensible to the burden of the honors he bore, for he had acquired them toilfully, wresting them one by one from among the scrum of chicaneering competitors; and yet if anybody had asked him what he considered his greatest claim to distinction, he would without hesitation have answered that at that particular moment it was sitting opposite him, dressed in a simple morning gown and toying with an omelet.

The Count never made a secret of it that after having been his wife's husband for twelve years he was still her lover. The Countess' feelings for her husband were less obvious, but something could be deduced from the fact that she made it a point to partake of breakfast with him every morning instead of, like most women of her station, sipping her chocolate in bed and laboriously nursing her complexion till well into the afternoon. Not because she had no need to nurse her complexion; she might, that being the case, have spent the time admiring herself in front of her mirror, or listening to the flatteries of her femme de chambre. She was at the breakfast-table every morning because her

husband desired it, and because she found meeting her husband's wishes quite as pleasant an occupation as following out her own initiative.

She was never much of an eater, and this morning she had a very legitimate excuse for her failure of appetite. Over her hung the cloud of anxiety which even the most seasoned hostess feels on the eve of an important function; and the Countess knew that, having high precedents of previous excellence to her credit, much would be expected from her that evening. The Count watched her with a smile.

"Don't worry — everything will be very nice," he said, reaching out his hand for hers across the table.

"I have no doubt of it," she said with a sigh which implied the relief his reassurance had brought her. "And if it is not, it won't be your fault. You gave me carte blanche."

"Pshaw, they would come if you gave them nothing but cold tea and dry Razzavanna bread—if you gave it them, that is," said the Count.

The Countess seemed to be following her own train of thought. "And Maurice Arfalov has accepted," she said pensively.

"Why should he not?" asked the Count with some vehemence.

"He has refused every other invitation this season — even the Governor's. He says he is too busy. If I had not supplemented my written invitation with a verbal one when I saw him at the first night of his new piece I don't think he would have come here either."

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"Well, suppose he had not?" said the Count, shrugging his shoulders. "He's certainly a very clever fellow, and says a smart thing now and then, but people are making a great deal too much fuss over him."

"People are grateful for being amused," returned the Countess.

"Oh, well, my dear, so long as they place him in his proper category.

The Countess interrupted him with a gesture of infinite weariness.

"I had no intention of discussing him at any length, Casimir."

"A thousand, thousand pardons," was his humble reply.

She flashed him a brilliant smile, and rose to leave the table. At that moment a lackey entered with an official-looking envelope.

"A courier brought this, your Excellency."

The man withdrew, but the Countess paused.

"May I know?" she asked brightly.

The Count had followed to open the door for her, and now halted, the unopened envelope between his fingers. A look of joy overspread his face at his wife's request. She could pay him no greater compliment than to show an interest in his affairs.

Rapidly he broke the seal and glanced at the missive. Then he looked at his wife, but he knew that his mien was disturbed, and that she saw it.

"Only some rioting at the down-end of the town, my dear," he informed her.

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all."

She nodded and was about to go, when she suddenly stopped again.

"Who is involved?"

The sub-prefect hesitated, twirling the paper irresolutely in his hands for an instant, and then held it out to her.

"Serious excesses against the Jews are in progress. Immediate steps are being taken."

She kept her eyes on the words much longer than was necessary to gather their import. Then without a syllable of comment she gave the paper back to the Count and walked out. He waited till the door had closed behind her, and then with an oath tore the paper into shreds.

Still, whatever the episode of that morning might imply to the Countess, her demeanor in the evening left no doubt that her whole mind was concentrated on her duties as hostess. As she moved in and out among her guests, the glittering assembly seemed only a tolerably adequate setting to her own splendid self. It was plain that the deference which even her superiors in rank paid to her was due to the magic of her personality and not to the prestige which the occasion afforded her.

Almost from the hour her husband had taken up his post in Charkov, she had been assigned—it could not be said she had assumed—her position of a leader, nay, the leader of Charkov society. She had taken their breath away, she had dazzled them. Their astonishment at her had been so great that they had even forgotten to question her credentials, her antecedents. She was a woman with whom it was obviously impossible to do anything

save take her for granted. There were those who maintained — not, however, by way of criticism — that there was something foreign, something exotic about her. The reply was that it was a pity more exotics like her did not grow in their midst.

The glitter and the gayety increased. Everybody knew everybody else, and the talk ran easily. Then gradually by the mysterious law that governs these things, the various topics converged into one main channel of conversation — the disturbances in the Jewish portion of the town.

The prevailing opinion was that these Jews were a great nuisance. They persisted in getting themselves massacred, and they did not even do it dis-They made so much noise about it, and would take the whole world into their confidence. Not that the thing really mattered, but it was unpleasant when it happened at such close quarters it exposed one to all sorts of inconveniences. lady narrated how she was driving in the affected neighborhood that morning, when a woman pursued by two navvies darted suddenly out of a side street and threw herself bodily into the landau, shrieking for protection at the top of her voice. The carriage had to stop for the footman to drag her out, after which the two navvies took charge of her. But the woman's screams were something disgraceful, and the lady, instead of continuing her shopping, had to drive straight to her doctor and ask for a sedative.

"Really?" commented the Countess Malako-vitch, who was among the listeners, as she moved on with an enigmatic smile.

A few minutes later she had worked her way across the length of the hall to the balcony which had been her real objective. Maurice Arfalov, who was leaning over the rail looking meditatively down into the garden below, turned to her slowly as she stepped out.

"I am hearing very bad accounts of you, Maurice Ippolytovitch, and now I can unfortunately bear witness to the truth of them myself," said the Countess. "Why are you playing the hermit? You are sulking with us. You have been here nearly an hour and there is no 'winged word' of yours speeding through the room yet."

"They have a rival interest in there," replied Arfalov.

"And since when do you allow another interest to compete with yours?" asked the Countess. "I don't as a rule, I admit," said Arfalov

"I don't as a rule, I admit," said Arfalov bluntly, "but I am making an exception to-night. I want them to talk. They are playing into my hands."

"I don't understand," said the Countess.

Arfalov bowed. "Excuse my not being more explicit, Countess. I will ask you a favor instead. Will you allow me to come down upon your guests with something that will produce a sensation?"

"I doubt if you can do that. You have done it so often that we have become hardened. You see how a man may pay the penalty of his own genius."

"Nevertheless, may I try?"

"You may try, certainly."

"Thank you. Then I shall finish thinking the matter out."

"I see — a hint that you wish to be left alone now?"

He gave her a long, hesitating look. Then he said slowly:

"Yes, I would prefer to be left alone."

She smiled and held out her hand.

"I shall be ready in a quarter of an hour," he added, keeping her hand in his as he helped her through the balcony door back into the salon.

The Countess was well aware what she said when, in speaking that morning to her husband of Maurice Arfalov, she had congratulated herself on his coming. Arfalov's presence ensured success to any gathering, and the Countess went away happy in the conviction that, although he had not justified her expectations as yet, the evening would not pass without his leaving his mark upon it.

This young man—he was barely thirty-five—had made for himself an unique position. The most versatile literary genius of his day, decadent, impressionist, Heinesque, he was paramount on the stage, in fiction, in journalism. In his dramas, his novels, his feuilletons, he lashed society until it writhed—with laughter. And, chartered libertine of speech and print that he was, he had no enemies, because no one was bold enough to cross swords with him.

He knew his power, he knew the latitude of his license as he gazed in on the throng. The quarter of an hour was up, and he felt, without looking, the Countess' eyes upon him. He nodded into vacancy as though giving her the signal, and with a few brisk steps mounted the platform where the orches-

tra was playing. Deftly he snatched the baton from the conductor's hand, and the music — a furious Ukraine melody — tagged off, as though broken in halves, with a few jagged notes of disconsolate discord. Instantly the chatter hushed; all eyes were turned to the platform to know the cause of the breakdown. There, on the second step, the baton uplifted to command attention, stood Maurice Arfalov, his keen, eager face tense, but smiling. In wild pell-mell they crowded nearer. Maurice Arfalov was worth hearing, in fact, they had been waiting all the time — what had he to say?

"Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen," rang out his high staccato, "you may perhaps be aware that not many miles from here events have occurred which have resulted in a good deal of human misery. Shops have been pillaged; houses have been burned; men, women, children have been killed or maimed; some thousands of our fellow-creatures have been rendered homeless and reduced to the verge of starvation. Let us show that even in the midst of our amusements we are not unmindful of our human obligations. I plead the cause of the Jewish widows and orphans. Who will give?"

He turned round and beckoned to the man who was playing the tambourine.

"Lend me this," he said.

The man complied instantly. Arfalov took the instrument, rattled it in approved showman fashion, and then holding it out as a receptacle, repeated his question:

"Who will give?"

The hush continued, but this time it expressed

utter bewilderment. What was he about? If this was a jest, then why not phrase it as a jest? Why this sober, almost solemn, utterance? The idea in itself was good — asking them to get up a subscription for the Jews! But he had missed his opportunity. The situation simply bristled for him, incomparable wit that he was, with chances of quip and crank, of sardonic phrase and biting epigram.

And then, suddenly, the real interpretation of the thing dawned upon them. Why, of course—how stupid not to have seen it at once—this was the joke, the joke was in his being serious, in his intention to be taken seriously. They, the bureaucratic world, the accredited trustees of law and order, were to be made to pay for their failure, their dereliction of duty, in hard cash. They were to make compensation, nay, apology to these Jews whom they had failed to protect. What a brilliant sarcasm! Ah, Maurice Arfalov was Maurice Arfalov after all. He had not disappointed them. And therefore they must not disappoint him. They must keep up the joke.

It was nothing short of a scramble to get to the tambourine, the men with gold and paper, some of the women with rings and bracelets and pendants. Imperturbably Arfalov watched his harvest growing. When the rush was over he stepped down and walked straight up to the hostess. He had not looked at her once during the collection, but instinctively he knew where to find her. Were her eyes drawing him?

"Countess, may I ask you to take care of this for a little while?"

"Yes, till to-morrow afternoon, at four o'clock," she replied under her breath.

The Countess Malakovitch had had many social successes, but none like this one. Maurice Arfalov had made it historic. At three in the morning the Countess was taking off her jewelry in her bedroom. She examined the ornaments one by one, and picking out a fine necklace, wrapped it up separately.

"It must go to the jeweler's — one of the stones is loose," she explained to the maid who looked on.

Arfalov, as the Countess could have foretold, was punctual to the minute.

"Thank you very much," she said as he entered. He smiled. "Well, did I startle them?"

"It is all in this casket — take it, please," she said, ignoring his question. "I amused myself — I hope you are not angry — with calculating the amount. There are about a thousand roubles in money, and the trinkets ought to realize another fifteen hundred."

"That is something," said Arfalov.

"But not all. You forget that I have not contributed my quota. Here it is." She unwrapped the necklace and laid it with the rest. "It will about double the collection, I think. But I want you to be good enough to have the real stones replaced by paste ones and then to return me the chain. I could wear it and nobody would be the wiser. I prefer to do without explanations where I can."

He looked at her hard and seemed struggling

with a question. She forestalled him with one of her own.

"And now, please tell me — what made you do this?"

He got up and faced her squarely. "It struck me, madam, that among the Jewish victims there might be some relatives of mine."

"Ah!" broke from the Countess.

"I have been masquerading among you," he continued, still eyeing her steadily. "At times I got quite furious because no one showed the shadow of a suspicion that Maurice Ippolytovitch Arfalov concealed Moses Isaacovitch Rafalov. I felt like a little boy who, in a fit of pique, had hidden himself and then fretted because no one came to look for him. You are the first one to look for me, Countess—I am greatly obliged to you." He paused, busy with his own thoughts, his retrospects. "Yes, madam, it is a long, long time since I broke away from my people, but their cry still reaches me across the gulf of the years. And now question for question: what made you add your necklace?"

"The same reason that made you ask for it, Moses Rafalov."

"Then you knew to whom my appeal was mainly addressed?"

"I guessed it from your first words. I guessed whom you were probing. Listen. My story is a simple one. I was left an orphan at sixteen. I had no home, no means of livelihood. The choice before me was to sell either my body or my soul. I went into the convent. The Count, my husband, saw me. He was then a small provincial official,

without money, without influence. It seemed to me I might do worse—"

Arfalov gave a short laugh. "That he might do worse," he corrected her.

"I reject that, even as a gallantry," she said with spirit. "I had more to gain from my husband than he from me."

"I humbly take your word for it," replied Arfalov.

The Countess remained for a few moments wrapped in thought. Strange, yesterday she had refused to discuss Arfalov with her husband. This afternoon she had to refuse to discuss her husband with Arfalov. What surprised her was that she found nothing surprising in this rapid development.

"A very commonplace story, is it not?" she resumed.

"Tell me," he said, in a tone more imperative and insistent than he had yet used, "what does your husband — either in his official or private capacity — say of yesterday's occurrences?"

"He says nothing."

"Nothing?"

"The word Jew is never spoken aloud between us. That is our arrangement."

"And have you no desire to speak it?"

She was silent. Her manner was curiously fraught with confusion and alarm.

"I will deduce nothing from your silence," he continued gently. "I have not come here to torment you. I will speak to you of nothing but what you permit. Would you, perhaps, like to know why



I have kept out of the crowd all this time — why I have not shown myself anywhere?"

"Yes, I would like to know that," she replied quickly.

"It was to avoid meeting you. I have known for over a year that you are a Jewess — ever since our talk at the skating fête last winter. I then caught you in that Oriental mood which I had heard people say they had observed in you, but which I had never had an opportunity of studying for myself. I kept out of your way after that because I could not make up my mind what attitude to take towards you. I should not have come last night, despite my written and verbal acceptances, but then came the news of these riots, and the chance of understanding you was too good to be lost."

"But why this talk of attitudes — of understandings?" she asked faintly.

"Because you appealed so powerfully to the racial instinct in me. When I looked at you I thought of Solomon's Temple, I thought of the Arch of Titus. I remembered all the triumphs, all the humiliations that crowd our history. I come into contact with many Jews, but it is only in your presence that I feel a Jew. In dealing with me, then, you must deal with me as such or not at all. Do you see now — was I right in being cautious about putting myself within the sphere of your influence?"

For reply, the Countess held up a warning hand. Then he too heard the approaching step in the corridor. She took up the necklace and thrust it upon him. "Quick, put this in your pocket."

The Count entered. Cordially he shook hands with the visitor. "You are very, very kind to come and keep my wife company, Maurice Ippolytovitch. See how flushed and interested she is looking. I suppose you have been making her laugh — eh? I always tell her she does not eat enough and laugh enough."

"Beware, madam, you are rapidly on the road to physical and moral dyspepsia," said Arfalov.

The Count applauded. "That's right, frighten her."

"I would rather try to cure her."

"Ha, I take you at your word!" exclaimed the Count. "But you know what that will mean; you will have to come and see us very often."

Arfalov flashed a glance at the Countess, but she did not respond to it. A few minutes later he rose to go.

"This belongs to me," he said, taking up from the table the casket containing his last night's collection.

"I know," said the Count curtly.

But however much the Count had refrained from enlarging on the casket incident at the time, a further discussion of it and a good deal of subsequent reflection concerning it were forced upon him some two days later.

He was sitting in his study when a visiting card was brought to him. It was a large square card, that of a tradesman. "He wishes to see your Excellency privately," added the footman.

"Show him in," said the Count, and presently there entered a wizened little man, bowing and

scraping obsequiously.

"Well, what is it now, Dimitrovitch?" asked the Count cheerily. "More bargains—turquoise rings, antique amulets—I warn you I haven't a copeck to spare."

The little man squirmed with embarrassment. "I beg your Excellency's pardon, but I really have not come to sell anything to-day. I want your Excellency's most gracious advice and instructions on a certain matter."

"Well, out with it."

"It was like this, your Excellency. The day before vesterday there came to me Gospodin Maurice Arfalov, and he brought me various articles of jewelry which he wished me to buy. Now I know Gospodin Arfalov very well - I often read his writings in the newspapers and go to see his plays, so I felt safe in buying the jewelry from him. But when we had concluded that deal he pulled out a diamond necklace which I recognized at once. was the one your Excellency bought for her ladyship three years ago — there was my trade-mark on the clasp. I was to take out the stones and sell them in the open market for the highest price. Well, as I said, I know Gospodin Arfalov and I have the greatest esteem for him, and I was certain that there was nothing — what shall I say? — lefthanded in the affair. . . ."

"Well, what is the point?" cried the Count im-

patiently. His impatience was directed not so much against the man as against himself. He was angry with himself for not seeing his way through the whole business at a glance.

Dimitrovitch was squirming more painfully than ever. "You see, your Excellency, the circumstances seemed to me a little peculiar. Her ladyship might have sent the necklace through a servant. I considered the thing for two days, and then I thought it my duty to come and tell your Excellency of it, although, of course, I have the highest esteem for Gospodin Arfalov, and her ladyship, to be sure, is her ladyship—"

The Count nodded calmly. "You did quite right, my friend. I am obliged to you. Good morning."

"But what am I to do — the necklace, your Excellency?" stammered the man.

"Oh, about the necklace—quite so," said the Count, having evidently to bring his thoughts back to the matter with an effort, "why—you will do as Gospodin Arfalov has asked you to do."

The first question the Count had to consider when he was alone again was whether he trusted his wife, the mother of his two dead children. And looking at it from various aspects, he saw no reason why he should not. The sale of the necklace showed nothing. He had only his salary on which to keep up appearances, and he had to stint himself of many a little luxury to procure for his wife an adequate stock of jewelry. But as he had made her a present of it, it was her property and she had a right to do with it what she liked.

Again, that she had entrusted the transaction to



Arfalov implied nothing either. It was obvious that it was her contribution to the fund for the distressed Jews Arfalov had raised at the soirée it certainly was not a loan or gift to Arfalov, who was known to have made quite a fortune by his pen. She could not have told her husband of it, for that would have involved discussion of Jewish affairs. which would have been counter to their arrange-It showed her as a dutiful wife to whom the domestic statutes were sacred. Further, the fact that she had handed the ornament to Arfalov in private, and not in the presence of the assembled guests, was easily explained by her abhorrence of And yet, though the incident gave no ostentation. handle for suspicion in its single details, the Count was confronted with the astonishing general conclusion that he had discovered his wife in a secret understanding with a stranger.

So the Count's premises and conclusions, each counterbalancing the other, kept his mind in equipoise. Nor did he in the ensuing weeks find much leisure for making observations which might upset this equilibrium. His time was fully occupied with official duties. With a great flourish of trumpets an inquiry had been instituted into the causes and nature of the disturbances in the Jewish quarter. A large number of arrests had been made, and dire punishment was to be meted out to the malefactors.

To give the tribunal greater authority and bona fides, the inquiry was conducted not by the local magistrates, but by the sub-prefect, as directly representing the Government. The Count was in the

court early and late, conducting the investigations with the gravest air in the world, though none knew better than he what a farce it all was. For the same official dispatch which had appointed him acting president, had also contained the result of the inquiry. The verdict was to be that the Jews were themselves responsible for their misfortunes—some of them had maltreated a passing Christian, or another of them had attempted to cheat a non-Jewish servant-girl out of her wages, and so had drawn upon himself the righteous indignation of her relatives—any story would do, so long as it traced the outbreak of the disturbances directly back to the Jews themselves. All Christians arrested were to be released immediately.

The only kind of supervision which the Count exercised over his domestic affairs during this time was to keep himself informed of the comings and goings of Maurice Arfalov. He found that the latter called on an average twice a week and stayed about an hour. No machinery was necessary to obtain the information; his wife supplied him with it each time herself.

Arfalov, she told him, was writing a new play, the most important work he had yet attempted, and he brought the various scenes for her to criticise. He had jokingly, or perhaps seriously, suggested that she should allow her name to appear as collaborator. All this the Countess told her husband with perfect frankness, without the tremor of an eyelash, with a lack of self-consciousness which might have reassured an Othello. And having no fault to find with anything, the Count perversely

felt inclined to quarrel with this very faultleament. The stereotyped sameness of her manner, the unruffled calm which took no cognizance of the stirring official transaction in which she knew her husband had a leading part — was she not, perhaps, overdoing her dutiful observance of their compact of silence?

It was the day whereon the inquiry concluded. The Count had returned home late in the afternoon, and a quarter of an hour afterwards Arfalov was announced. The Countess was pouring out tea.

"Ah, glad to see you," exclaimed the Count genially. "I have been rather busy of late, but now I shall enjoy a little more of your company, I hope."

Arfalov's clouded face did not brighten at the warm welcome. If anything, his brows wrinkled a little more.

"I have just heard the decision of the court," he said.

"What decision?" asked the Count with bureaucratic evasiveness.

"It is nothing less than a premium on murder," continued Arfalov, brusquely.

The Count was on his feet in an instant.

"I must not allow you to say that, Maurice Ippolytovitch," he exclaimed warmly. "I am willing to extend to you every social privilege, but I must draw the line at permitting you to talk treason under my roof. I don't want to be bombastic, but the inquiry took place under the immediate auspices of his Majesty's Councilors, and as such

the verdict is the expression of his Majesty's opinion. Surely, that is not to be questioned."

"The Councilors, speaking in your voice, my dear Count, may muzzle my expression of opinion," said Arfalov, keeping his vehemence down with evident difficulty, "but they will not muzzle the world, the continental and trans-Atlantic press."

The Count shrugged his shoulders. "That is not my business. I have done my duty. I am not responsible to the continental and trans-Atlantic press — I am only responsible to my superiors."

"And your superiors?" asked Arfalov, quickly. The Count threw up his hands in protest. "Oh, I can't go into that. In fact, I had better not go into anything with you to-day, Maurice Ippolyto-vitch; you seem — pardon me — in an argumentative mood, and I am not your match — nor do I know any one who is. So will you excuse me? I have to work at my report."

He left the room, not because there was any urgency in the matter of the report, but because he felt his self-control slipping from him. Throughout his colloquy with Arfalov his side-glance had scrutinized his wife's face, his wife's manner, and the strands of his patience seemed snapping one by one. There she sat motionless, Sphinx-like, unresponsive. And all the while he suspected — had he begun to suspect? — that beneath that smooth frozen surface there surged a tide of volcanic turbulence. Great Heavens! would she never speak? Did she not see that her silence was getting on his nerves, was becoming a torment, an insult? He must hear her speak, he must find out what she

thought of all this. She was not always silent, she was silent only in his presence. She spoke of it to Arfalov, he was quite sure of that.

So he came back and stood with his ear glued to the door. She was his wife, he had a right to know her inmost thoughts, a greater right than this stranger. Ah, she spoke fluently enough now! His hearing was very good, and her words rang clear and distinct.

"You must not come here any more, Moses Rafalov," she was saying. "You are rewarding me for having roused your racial consciousness by rousing mine in turn. You are making me dissatisfied with my surroundings, my"—she hesitated over the word—"my associates. If this goes on it must end in an overthrow of the life I have lived these last twelve years, and you cannot expect me to contemplate that with an easy mind. My mind is by no means easy. I am growing mortally afraid. Each time you come I feel more and more afraid of myself and"—again she hesitated—"and you. And therefore, as you are my friend, I implore you to keep away from me."

"And by getting rid of me," he asked, "will you get rid of everything else as well?"

"I don't know what to say, what to think," she replied brokenly. "I am hoping that time may bring its own counsel. At present I am feeling like the coward, the renegade, I am. I have scrambled into safety, not counting the cost, and now from behind my battlements I peep at my brothers and sisters as they sit numbering their dead—" she broke off and buried her face in her hands.

Arfalov came over to her and lightly put his hand on her shoulder.

"Forgive me, Catherine," he said, his voice clear but shaking, "I did not want to distress you. Nothing was further from my mind than to bring a spirit of discontent or unrest into your life. It was selfish of me to consider only my point of view. I ought to have allowed for and provided against the possibility of this reflex action on you. But now the mischief is done you will not undo it by sending me away. Believe me, I speak honestly when I say that. You will be thrown back on yourself in your isolation. The voices which have begun to clamor in you will not lapse into silence because they have no outward listener; they will strike inwardly, echoing and echoing on until all your heart is one agonized cry. You dare not send me away now; you must have me near you to be your safety valve. You will speak of these things and I shall listen - Heaven grant you may find relief that way! It is a poor resource that I have to offer, but it is the only one."

"Perhaps I may be able to suggest another."

Arfalov turned without haste and without disturbance to see the Count standing in the doorway. The Countess, too, looked up, but beyond a little gasp, showed no sign of emotion.

"Come, Moses Rafalov, to give you what is apparently your true name, and you, madam," said the Count, stepping forward, "we have a difficult task before us. We must square this triangular arrangement. It was most considerate of you not to trouble me with the task of your own accord."

"We shall be very glad of your assistance, Count," said Arfalov.

"Your flippancy becomes you - buffoon," said the Count, lingering upon the last word. "But you can speak seriously enough when it suits you. You spoke very seriously just now, when your business in hand was to pervert a woman. Listen to what you have done, Gospodin Rafalov. You have taken advantage of the trust which I reposed in you, of the companionship with my wife which I did not grudge you — in order to corrupt her. You coquetted not with her heart but with her soul with some women they are one and the same. your own showing you have reduced her to an impasse from which"—he leapt up with a cry of anger, upsetting his chair in the act. "God! and I sit here arguing with you as if the point at issue were the merits of a brand of cigars!"

"I do not ask you to argue, Count," said Arfalov, quietly.

"Very good, Gospodin Rafalov. I am glad our opinions coincide. We will act first and talk afterwards, if there are two of us left to talk. As the challenged party, you have the choice of weapons. Which do you prefer, the pistol or the rapier?"

Not a muscle of Arfalov's face moved. "I have never handled either. But perhaps I should prefer the pistol. There is more dispatch about it."

"The pistol, then," said the Count, icily. "I suggest turned backs at thirty paces and to fire simultaneously. But we can leave all that to our seconds. In any case, Gospodin Rafalov, your chances of getting off with a whole skin are small."

"Unless you fire into the air," said Arfalov.

"I have no intention of doing so," said the Count, and then, his fury blazing up, "on my honor as a servant of the Emperor, I shall not fire into the air."

Arfalov made a gesture of indifference. "As you please, your Excellency. Could the matter, however, stand over for four or five days? I am at work on a play I am rather interested in, and should like to finish it."

"I have no objection," said the Count. "But I should advise you to use the time, instead, in practicing at a target."

"Thank you — you are very considerate," said Arfalov, gravely. Then he turned to the Countess and made her a deep obeisance. "I shall do myself the pleasure of coming to make my adieux to you, madam, in due course."

He walked out, while the Count touched the bell for the footman to open the street door. Then he faced his wife, waiting for her to speak. Ah, at last he had made her speak.

"What will you gain by murdering that man?" she asked him.

"Your esteem, I hope. Perhaps you will think more highly of me for giving you this proof that I desire your undivided attention."

"You have that, Casimir — you have always had that," she exclaimed, passionately. "It was not really Arfalov who reminded me that I was born a Jewess — the reminder came from these riots. Arfalov was to me nothing more than an accident. The essential truth, I tell you, has lain dormant in

me without my knowing it, and the cry of agony from those smoldering hovels came and stirred it into life."

"You said you were growing afraid of him."

"I was afraid of fear. He personified my fear. Each time I looked at him I became conscious that the ground had slipped from under me another inch."

"He said he had become a necessity to you," persisted the Count, relentlessly. "No man shall boast of that in my hearing and live. If it was a lie, he shall die for the lie. I have sworn it."

"He meant well, Casimir—he meant well!" she cried. "He wanted to help me; he wanted to retrieve the fault he imagined he had committed. It was a charity to let him think that he could. While he was busy with my misery he forgot his own."

"You have words for everything," he thundered at her.

She came and laid a trembling hand on his arm. "Not words only, Casimir, but counsel, good counsel, my husband. It is I who will suggest how to set this matter right, neither Arfalov nor you. Let us go hence. Let us banish ourselves from this crowding, cruel world and exile ourselves into peace. Your little country house will be large enough for us, your handful of acres will grow enough to feed us, to sustain us for a vigorous, happy, contented old age. God! what more can one demand of life than to be happy and at peace?"

He stared at her, but astonishment sealed his lips.

"Oh, don't look at me as if I were mad!" she implored him. "This is no sudden whim of mine; I have turned it over in my brain, my heart, many and many a time. Only the need of saying it has never been so great as now. What will it be for me to feel that the man I hold dearest in the world is abetting a policy of injustice and mercilessness against my people? What will it be for you to know what I feel — to know that every act of duty to your masters is an act of treason to your wife, a stab to her heart, her conscience? For the sake of our love, Casimir, do as I tell you. Let us hide where we shall neither see nor hear — where we shall feel nothing except how strong our love is."

It was still some seconds before he could collect himself. Then he said slowly, almost ponderously:

"You to give up your position — I my career? The two of us to lose everything we have toiled for all these years?"

"Yes, Casimir, to lose everything — and to gain one another."

He shook his head. "I am not a mole. I was not born to burrow in the ground."

"Casimir!" she sobbed.

His eyes softened, but his voice was still ironhard. "No, Catherine, your plan does not suit me. You must think of something else. I cannot give up my career because your friend Arfalov comes to discuss his plays with you. He has wasted a good hour of my time as it is. I must get on with my report. Au revoir."

He turned and left her without the usual caress—the first time for twelve years. He knew quite

well that she was safe; she would do nothing desperate. Her nerves had got out of order. She was run down with the gaieties of the season and so had reason to be a little hysterical. As soon as his report was finished he would ask for three months' leave and take her into the bracing air of the Caucasus. The strong mountain wind would soon scatter her cobwebs, and he would take good care that this did not happen a second time. would keep her out of the way of neurotic scribblers; she should not see a newspaper — to some extent he would put her own plan into practice; she should hear and see nothing it was not good for her to hear or to see. Yes, if only he had his report finished, so that he might begin his guardianship over her!

Three days these thoughts ran as a strong undercurrent in his mind as he sat working in furious haste in his study, assisted by his two clerks, arranging, sorting, sifting the voluminous mass of matter which represented the proceedings of the inquiry. On the fourth he received a visit from the Commissioner of Police, and the news the latter brought him made the sub-prefect look round anxiously to see that there was no unwarranted list-The Commissioner did not stay long, and immediately he left the Count locked up his papers and prepared to follow him. But he walked slowly and without any apparent concern through the rooms - in one of them he might meet his wife, and he had made up his mind that she should see or hear nothing that was not good for her.

He did not meet his wife in the sitting-room, the

dining-room or the salon. But he did meet her in the hall. She was in walking attire and had just come in. She was very pale, and in her eyes seemed to lie the shadow of a haunting terror.

The Count stood rooted to the spot.

"Where have you been?" His lips could scarcely frame the question.

"You know where I have been as well as I know where you are going," she answered, with fluttering breath. "I saw the Commissioner leave the house just now. I know what he came to tell you - I found it out before. I could not rest this afternoon; a curious intuition drew me forth. I guessed where the disaster was impending and I went down there "-she pointed indefinitely over her shoulder—"to see for myself. Arfalov was right when he said that the verdict placed a premium on murder. More murder was being prepared openly and in the light of day. I watched the murderers, the incendiaries prowling around with their knives, their petroleum cans: I watched the threatened victims shelter themselves and their poor little homes - shelter, oh, mockery of the word! - behind barricades of match-wood that would only give more fuel to the flames. . . . Oh, I saw all that, Casimir, and now I come to you to plead for them. Help them, protect them - remember what they are to me, and remember what I am to vou."

"I have my instructions, Catherine," he answered between closed teeth. Curse the unlucky chance that had made her see and hear the one thing on earth she should not have seen and heard!

She gave him a long searching look and passed in. He gazed after her irresolutely for an instant and then continued his way into the street. His groom was waiting for him there holding his horse. The beautiful animal whinnied as he swung into the saddle.

- "She has been missing me, eh, Gregor?" said the Count.
- "Yes, your Excellency, you have not had her out for four days. She is rather fresh. Hold her close."

The Count nodded and cantered off. In ten minutes he had arrived at the market-place. The Commissioner of Police came to meet him.

"The detachment of a hundred and fifty foot is here, according to orders, your Excellency," he said, "but"—he paused significantly—" just look over there."

The Count followed his glance, comparing the handful of soldiers with the vast crowds of the rioters massing in the gathering twilight at the lower end of the market-place and overflowing into the side streets leading to the Jewish quarter. Evidently they were waiting for the dark to set in before beginning their work — it was better fun in the dark, they knew from experience. One or two of the more impatient spirits had already lit their torches and were flourishing them aloft as though signaling to the night to hasten her coming.

The sight seemed to make the Count lose control of his thoughts. They ranged with a mechanic action of their own from the rioters to his wife, and from his wife back again to the rioters. At first it seemed a ridiculous combination. It was as though his mind had to travel untold distances in order to find the connecting link. But gradually he grew to see clearer — the torches were becoming more numerous. He saw, without a possibility of dissimulation, that between these rioters and his wife he had got into a terrible strait.

Between these two extremes there lay a number of irreconcilable facts which the occasion now called upon him to harmonize. He found that after all it was he who had to discover the way out of the impasse, and not his wife. Oh, yes, he had got himself into a terrible strait! Turn whichever way he would, the dilemma faced him: he must choose between his wife and his career. If he allowed the Commissioner to act according to the orders received from higher quarters, he dared not to face his wife again. If he over-rode those orders, it meant instant dismissal and irretrievable disgrace — and he had such a brilliant future before him!

And yet, it was his wife who had made him — it was to her he owed all his successes. If she now asked him to give them up for her, she was only demanding her rights. It was not his wife's fault that this new element had crept into her life, not even Arfalov's — he was beginning to admit that. It was the fault of the grimly tenacious old faith that would never release from its octopus grasp what at any time it had claimed for its own. And there was Arfalov. He was upon his honor to kill

him to-morrow — what would his wife say to that, what had she not already said? Ah, yes, his wife — everywhere his wife! And yet again, to become a mole, to burrow in the ground, as he himself had put it, to vegetate merely when he might blossom into full-grown glories, to be a forgotten nobody when he might be acclaimed by thousands — and again he saw the look in his wife's eyes when she asked him how he had answered her pleadings.

The masses over there grew thicker, darker. The torches flared more and more numerously. The sub-prefect drew a deep, deep breath as he beckoned the Commissioner over to him.

"Call upon them to disperse. If they refuse you will fire three volleys on them."

The Commissioner cast a hesitating look at the sub-prefect and then meeting his eyes did as he was told. A howl of derision from the mob answered him.

"Tell the men to load," said the sub-prefect.

"Blank cartridges, of course," said the Commissioner in a whisper.

" No -- ball."

The Commissioner started back. "But, your Excellency," he stammered, "those are not the instructions. We were merely to stand by, to makebelieve. . . ."

"Who commands here — you or I?" roared the sub-prefect.

The Commissioner saluted and told the men to load. Then he turned back to the sub-prefect and said gruffly:

"I should advise your Excellency to pull back a

little way if you wish them to fire. You are right in front of the platoon."

"Ah, yes, of course, thank you," said the subprefect vacantly, as he drew his horse back a yard or two out of range of the pointing rifles.

The first volley rang out. When the smoke cleared the dark serried masses were still standing darkly serried and unbroken. The second volley—the same result.

"Cursed dogs, you are firing into the air!" roared the sub-prefect.

The words glanced back upon his memory, making it tingle with the impact. They reminded him of Arfalov — they reminded him of his wife — in a great blinding flash they made him see all the stupendousness of his dilemma. And yet — he gave a great gasp — they also showed him the way out of it.

The third volley rang out, drowned the next instant by a thousand-throated yell of pain. The dense dark masses wavered and swayed a moment and then broke into a wild terror-stricken stampede. They had not expected this — to kill and to be killed were two totally different things.

But the soldiery remained stiff and motionless, as though petrified into statues. The hundred and fifty pairs of eyes were fixed on the still forms of horse and rider that lay across the firing-line, riddled by a score of bullets.

"The mare was restive—it was an accident," said the groom at the inquest.

"I saw him give her the spurs," testified the Commissioner of Police.

But whoever was the more right of the two, there is no doubt that the Count was most right of all.

The haute volée of Charkov still wonders what has become of the beautiful Countess Malakovitch, who, on the tragic death of her husband, vanished as though into thin air. The literary world deplores the disappearance of the brilliant Arfalov. whose work had done so much to raise the standard of literary taste throughout Russia. It is rumored that he gave up writing because the censor refused to license a play of his with powerfully pro-Semitic And the inhabitants of the little town tendencies. in the Pale of Settlement make many wild surmises as to the nature and bygones of the two strangers, who, appearing among them from out of the clouds, as it were, live the simple life of a typical Jewish household.

A FAMILY GATHERING

OR some days now Siffra Seidelmann had gone about with that sly smile lurking in the wrinkles of her motherly old face. With conspirator-like secrecy she was hugging her pleasing thought to herself, biding her time when she might confide it to Lemmel, her husband. Lemmel had been good to her through all the forty-odd years of their married life, but a man is a man, and one can never be sure in what unexpected places his innate perversity of soul might break out. So one morning, when Lemmel came and told her that his tender for the supply of horses to the neighboring garrison had been accepted, she thought she would venture to broach the subject.

"Lemmel, do you know that in a week it's Pesach?" she began.

"Whether I know!" he shouted indignantly. "Here I've been swept from one room into another for a month, while the house has been made to stand with the roof in the ground and the foundations in the air, and then she asks me if I know that it's Pesach! It's lucky I was born a dealer in horses, and not in dogs. Else instead of living in the stables I should have had to live in a kennel."

"That's quite right, Lemmel," smiled Siffra, knowing from his bluster that she had caught him

in one of his genial moods. "And now tell me—have you decided whom we are to have this year at our Seder table?"

"Have I decided — what do you mean?" he asked in surprise. "You know quite well there are always a number of poor strangers in the synagogue, and after the service I shall, as usual, pick out two or three of the hungriest-looking . . ."

"Strangers?" echoed Siffra, softly. "Must we always have strangers when, thank God, we have of our own?"

Lemmel shifted his spectacles high up on his forehead and glared at her ferociously.

"Woman, are you mad? Of course we have of our own. But where are they? Scattered in the five quarters of the world — in Kieff, in Warsaw, in Petersburg . . ."

"Yes, I know," said Siffra, supressing a sigh, but suppose we ask them all to come here and spend the Passover with us?"

Lemmel gaped at her open-mouthed, and his ruddy face became a choleric pink. Quickly, to forestall the impending outbreak, Siffra laid her hand on his arm.

"Lemmel, crown of my heart, why indeed shouldn't we? The old nest has been empty so long. It's six years since we last had them all together under one roof, at Malka's wedding. And then it was only for a few hours or so. But to have them with us for a whole week — just fancy that, Lemmel!"

Lemmel was tapering the ends of his beard into a point, apparently still fighting for words.

"There's nothing in the world to prevent it," continued Siffra, hastily. "The house is big enough. Rooms we have in plenty. Meat and drink, thank God, we are able to offer them to their heart's content, and everything of the best. And what a joy it will be to them to meet each other again. You know how their hearts yearn towards one another and how . . ."

"Like a windmill she rattles on!" Lemmel interrupted her fiercely. "Why don't you stop for a moment and give me time to say yes?"

"Oh, I'm so glad — so glad," cried Siffra, clapping her hands. "Then why were you so angry at the idea at first?"

"Why, you fool? Because I hadn't thought of it myself."

The same day registered letters, containing crisp new rouble notes, went off to each of Siffra and Lemmel Seidelmann's five daughters, inviting them, their husbands and children to come and spend the Passover with their parents. The rouble notes were intended to cover the traveling expenses, though that was hardly necessary, for the girls had all married well, as might be expected of the daughters of so rich a man as Lemmel Seidelmann. Sons, Lemmel and Siffra had none, but they had been compensated for their disappointment in that respect by the possession of a number of sturdy little grandsons.

When in the course of the next two or three days the replies came in and all had accepted, Siffra's joy knew no bounds. She went about treading on air. Lemmel broke out every now and then into spasmodic snatches of song, just as he did when he had made a good bargain. The preparation for the reception of the guests went on with redoubled energy, but Lemmel no longer complained. Siffra examined, almost visibly swelling with pride, the huge tub full of clear beetroot broth, the tall earthenware jars of goose-dripping, the gigantic baskets of eggs. Everything was on a colossal scale—commissariat for an army corps. To help Siffra, who was a host in herself, two widows were engaged as cooks, and the kitchen oven knew that it was in for a strenuous time.

By noon of the day preceding the festival all the visitors had arrived. A prodigious amount of kissing and embracing had been accomplished. So far as outward appearances went there could be no doubt that the Seidelmann family were united in the bonds of closest affection, which had only been drawn closer by their long separation.

To take the five daughters in order of seniority. There was Golda, now a buxon matron of forty. who had married a prosperous chandler from She had brought two girls in the pig-tail Odessa. stage, demure sober-faced little misses. Next came Bloomah, slight and sour-looking, who had married an optician and therefore wore, presumably as a sort of signboard or trade-mark, a gold-rimmed pince-nez. Then there was Malka, tall and stately, the beauty of the family, who it was not surprising had made the best match in the shape of the son of a Warsaw banker. She had long ago exchanged the homely name of Malka for the more high-sounding one of Melina. Dvoirah, the fourth, had always been a bit of a blue-stocking and had therefore appropriately married a teacher. On the same principle as Bloomah and her pince-nez, she advocated the advantages of her husband's profession by constantly conversing with him in French. Brinah, the youngest, had become the wife of a smart young lawyer, and Lemmel, on seeing her, rubbed his eyes in astonishment. Who would have believed that this self-possessed, assertive young woman, was the shrinking little maiden, who kept herself shut in behind locked doors the while Schachtel, the marriage-broker, and her prospective bridegroom were sitting downstairs, pen in hand, waiting to sign the betrothal contract.

It should be mentioned that all the daughters were blessed with progeny. But I have stopped at Golda's two little girls out of deference to the feelings of Siffra. She would have gone into a frenzy of apprehension if she had thought any one was making an inventory of her grandchildren. She knew there was nothing so conducive as that to stirring into activity the operations of the Evil Eye.

The whole house hummed like a beehive. Everybody was telling everything to everybody else. The broken threads of family history were knotted together, resulting in a terrible tangle till nobody knew what he had told whom, and so had to begin all over again. Suddenly there occurred the contretemps which sent the first discord through the harmony of the proceedings. A commotion was heard from the kitchen, and presently Siffra panted into the room, dragging with her a kicking yelling

youngster, his face and hands dripping with a red fluid. Malka, or rather Melina, started up with a scream and frantically caught him in her arms. Siffra, in trembling accents, assured her it was nothing. Yankel, in the course of his explorations, had clambered on to the boards covering the tub of beetroot broth, and the boards had given way under him. It was nothing—really nothing. But Melina seemed inclined to take a more serious view of the affair.

"Fancy leaving things like that in the way of little children. Why, he might have got drowned, the darling. And his beautiful new holiday suit all spoilt!"

"It all depends how children are brought up," observed Golda, with a laugh. "Thank God, I've never allowed mine to get into inquisitive habits."

"Excuse me, I think I know how to bring up children as well as any one," retorted Melina, considerably ruffled. "Besides, at home they have a nurse and a governess to look after them. Thank God, I can afford it. I suppose I had better go and clean him up a bit."

Nobody, however, seemed inclined to take into consideration poor Siffra's feelings in the matter. What about the beautiful beetroot broth she had toiled over so assiduously all the winter? To what extent had an unexpected ingredient like little Yankel, God bless him, rendered it unfit for use? But as she made her way back dolefully into the kitchen she admitted to herself that Malka was perfectly right. She had had no business to let Yankel play so near the tub with nobody to watch

him. She would apologize to Malka at the first opportunity.

A little later she received another shock. She had occasion to pass the room allotted to Dvoirah, and could not help overhearing a few words through the half-open door.

"There's a room to expect any one to sleep in," Dvoirah was saying to her husband. "And a bed—hard as a brick. Of course, as you are only a teacher and know more than all the rest put together, anything is good enough for us. Just as if we wanted charity. I've a good mind to tell her we're going over to the hotel."

Siffra tiptoed away as quickly and noiselessly as she could. She was not the kind to have it out with any one, and besides, she might put Dvoirah to the blush. She would have liked to have told Dvoirah that she had scrubbed and dusted this room with her own hands, and had transferred her own pillows and coverlet to the bed she had just heard spoken of with such contumely. But it wasn't worth it. Dvoirah, she was sure, hadn't meant anything. It was just her way of speaking—Dvoirah had always had rather a sharp point to her tongue.

But for the moment Siffra seemed to be in illluck's way. She was returning to the kitchen when, through the passage window, she saw Bloomah and her husband promenading up and down the garden path adjoining the house, apparently enjoying the mildness of the spring day. Siffra was about to poke her head out and throw them a pleasant word, when she gathered from the look on Bloomah's face that she was not in the humor for pleasantries. An instant later the couple had stopped well within earshot.

- "Did it say so in the letter?" asked Bloomah.
- "I'm sure I can't say," replied her husband.
- "Have you got the letter?"
- "Of course not. Why should I keep the silly letter?"

"Well," said Bloomah with emphasis, "if I had any idea the whole crowd had been invited, we should certainly not have come. I was distinctly under the impression that we were to be the only guests. Why, this isn't a house—it's a caravanserai. All this talk and confusion is bringing on my migraine worse than ever. . . ."

Siffra did not stay to hear any more, but walked away breathing very heavily. She had heard enough to prove to her that the little maneuver, which had been her own suggestion, had missed fire. It was she who had advised that Lemmel's letter to each of them should say nothing of the others' com-It was to have been a pleasant surprise to them all to meet thus unexpectedly. But after all. perhaps she was looking at things too somberly. Bloomah was a little peevish, no doubt tired from the long journey. And she had a headache — poor Bloomah, she had always been subject to headaches. Well, well, give them all time to shake down and for the holiday cheer to enter their souls. and everything would yet be all right.

And indeed, as the company sat assembled that evening at the long table, resplendent in its glinting cutlery, its solid silver candlesticks and whitegleaming napery, no one could say that their faces reflected anything but contentment and mutual goodwill. Lemmel, on his high throne of cushions, a commanding and patriarchal figure, gazed down the line stroking his beard and complacently rubbing his hands. What a splendid idea of Siffra's it had been! He smiled at his wife, his queen of the evening, and she steadfastly smiled back at him. There was no need to trouble him with her misgivings.

But Lemmel was to receive some inkling of them nevertheless. He had begun the Seder ritual and when he had got to the "Ma Nishtano" he called out cheerily:

- "Now, who is going to ask the Question?"
- "My Joseph," replied Brinah instantly.
- "My Baruch," said Bloomah almost in the same breath.
- "As far as I am aware, to ask the Question is the privilege of the youngest present," said Brinah stiffly.
- "What nonsense," said Bloomah, "there's only a difference of two days between the boys. And I'm the older of us two. But it doesn't matter. I've never made a habit of showing off with my children."

Brinah, satisfied with having gained her point, generously forbore to make a retort. But her triumph was short-lived. Little Joseph, though he could have said his task backward when alone, was discomfited by the presence of so many strangers, and stumbled through it painfully, with many an encouraging jog from his father.

"Shebchol halilous — on all other nights," construed little Joseph, "onu ouchlin — we eat," "oben yoush'vim — either reclining. . . ."

"Sitting—sitting!" came a correcting shout from the whole table.

Poor little Joseph shrank back in affright, and then bravely started again, having, however, meanwhile lost the place.

"Halajlo hasé — this night" "kulonu mesubim — all sitting."

"Reclining," his listeners corrected again in chorus.

This time little Joseph frankly threw up the sponge and broke into a pitiable howl. His mother caught him up in her arms and flashed round an indignant look.

"There's a fuss to make over a little mistake like that!" she cried. "As if it matters whether he says sitting or reclining. As far as I can see, none of you are doing either one or the other. And then to frighten his poor little life out of him with your shouts. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Come away, sonny."

And with a great parade of motherly solicitude she hurried him out of the room.

Lemmel looked after her somewhat bewildered, and then, seeing the humor of the situation, broke into a guffaw and rattled on with the service. Nor was the evening marred by any other mishap, excepting, perhaps, that the prophet Elijah's cup of wine got upset over Bloomah's new silk dress.

The next day the Seidelmann family made an

exceedingly imposing show at synagogue. Many a mother's eyes followed enviously the army of Siffra's descendants as they trooped home, taking up the whole breadth of the street. Ah, she was indeed a fortunate woman, was Siffra. Other people also had children living at great distances, but who could afford what Siffra could? And, indeed, there was nothing in Siffra's demeanor to show she did not deserve their envy. Although her heart might know, her face was no tell-tale.

The mid-day meal had passed off quite satisfactorily. The five women with their husbands were gathered in the parlor. Lemmel was taking his siesta, Siffra was busy in the kitchen.

"It's quite absurd," said Malka, alias Melina, with a yawn, "all this to-do that's made about Passover, all these ridiculous customs. I wonder what my friend, the Countess Stephanowska, would say if she saw me eating grass and herbs and things like that last night. Of course, I didn't eat them — I threw them under the table. But I had to pretend."

"My dear Melina," said Bloomah, smoothing out an imaginary crease in her frock, "you needn't talk disparagingly about our grand old customs just to inform us incidentally that you have a countess among your friends."

"Hark who's talking," cried Malka, bridling instantly. "There's a fine champion of our old customs! Don't you think I know you haven't a single Mezzuzah in your house and that you use the same crockery for meat and milk?"

And as if that wasn't enough an altercation broke

out simultaneously between Dvoirah and Golda. For some little time the latter had been listening with growing irritation to a conversation in French between Dvoirah and her husband. She had got the idea into her head that she was the subject of that conversation. At last she could stand it no longer.

- "Perhaps you've said enough about my hat," she exclaimed.
- "What do you mean, Golda?" asked Dvoirah, astonished.
- "Oh, you may look innocent, but you can't fool me. I understand quite enough French for that. You were talking about the hat I wore this morning, and you said you wouldn't give it to your washerwoman."
- "If that's what you think then why wear it?" asked Dvoirah, sweetly.
- "I assure you, Golda," interjected Dvoirah's husband, "we never mentioned your hat.".
- "You didn't? I know better!" shrieked Golda. "What do you think of them? French they must talk. Yes, my friend," she continued, addressing herself to Dvoirah's husband, "you talked a different language when you came to father and said you wouldn't have her unless he put another five hundred roubles on to her dowry. You talked plain, straightforward Yiddish then."
 - "It's a lie!" screamed Dvoirah.
 - "It isn't. You know it, too, Brinah, don't you?"
- "Brinah, if you give her right I'll scratch your eyes out!"
 - "You're not the only one in the world born with

nails," said Brinah, calmly. "As a matter of fact, though, Golda is wrong."

"See?" cried Dvoirah triumphantly. "I told you so."

"It was a thousand more that he asked — and he got it!" continued Brinah.

Happily at that moment the door opened and Siffra hurried in, pale and trembling.

"For God's sake, children," she quavered, "be a little more circumspect. You may say anything you like before me, but, I implore you, don't let your father know anything."

The adjuration seemed to have some effect. any rate things went a little more smoothly among the visitors after that, though it was the icy smoothness of strained relations. But there was much whispering in odd corners between the respective husbands and wives, and the result of these furtive confabulations was a unanimous resolution which, on the face of it, seemed to betoken a sort of telepathetic sympathy among the sisters rather than to accentuate their differences. For one after another they came to Lemmel and told him that circumstances had arisen which compelled them unfortunately to cut their stay short and to leave at the conclusion of the first part of the festival, in fact as soon as it was permissible to travel. Lemmel nodded, and said nothing.

And now they were all gone and the house was silent once more. Siffra was rummaging about the room and Lemmel watched her, puffing at his pipe.

"Of course, it was rather too much to ask of them, to stay here for a whole week," he said at last. "They have their houses and their businesses to look after."

"Yes, Lemmel," Siffra assented, quietly.

"It was very pleasant while they were here," continued Lemmel, thoughtfully, "and they have left pleasant recollections behind. The patter of those little feet will ring in my ears for many a day to come."

"Yes, Lemmel," said Siffra again, turning a little

more away from him.

"It was plain enough to see what good feeling there is among all of them to one another, and how they love us — just as they used to when they were children together here."

"Yes, Lemmel." The words came brokenly.

"But after all," Lemmel rose, and walking over laid his hand softly on her shoulder, "after all we two are the best company for each other, aren't we, old one?"

"We are, Lemmel. I — I quite understand."

And there could be no doubt that Lemmel also understood. Which was nothing wonderful. For if husband and wife cannot understand one another after forty years of married life, it is obviously time that they gave up trying.

SHEPHERD AND SHEEP

I

T was ten o'clock in the evening, and Ostrokov, the little township in Polish Prussia, was already turning over on its other side in bed. Only in the parlor of the "Lame Horse" things were still wide awake and merry. It was a distinguished gathering. There were Herr Pfrund the burgomaster, Herr Notarius Schwefelgeist, the town-clerk, and eight out of the ten town councilors; but the most important person there was not councilor, not town-clerk, nor even burgomaster: it was his Reverence Herr Rabbiner Jacob Eisenmann, the spiritual head of the Jewish community in the township. He it was who was paying for the beer.

A strong contrast to the stolid, florid faces and close-cropped polls were his own thin, sensitive features, and the black, wavy ringlets of hair that might have been no discredit to Absalom himself. Merrily he shook them back as they attempted to stray into his eyes whilst he was busy keeping the talk in swing so as to leave the others all their time free for drinking. Nor could he complain that his efforts were unappreciated. Many a hearty laugh he drew, in which he joined as heartily.

Yes, by St. Theodosius and the three candlesticks! this Jew rabbi was not at all a bad fellow. He did

not look at both sides of his money; he told stories that split your flanks, dozens and dozens of them, and each one different from the other. Yes, a very good fellow indeed, thought the burgomaster as he drained his tankard to the bottom and rose to go home, mindful of what had happened to him the last time he had outstayed his furlough.

"What, burgomaster! you setting such a bad example? I won't hear of it.—Here, my host, another round — your pet Bavarian, you know — the one you keep in the farthest corner of your cellar. — And that reminds me, Herr Burgomaster, of a story. Why, I am only just getting warm."

So the burgomaster stayed for another round and another story, and yet another round and another story. One might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. It was midnight ere the party staggered out on its fuddled way homewards, feeling that life was worth living, curtain-lectures notwithstanding.

"Good-night, gentlemen! Happy dreams and a happier awakening to you all!" cried the Herr Rabbiner cheerily.

"Everything will be all right, Herr Rabbiner; don't trouble," said the burgomaster mysteriously as he shook hands.

"Don't trouble, Herr Rabbiner. Everything will be all right," echoed Herr Schwefelgeist, the townclerk, with a mien of still greater mystery.

"Everything will be all right, Herr Rabbiner. Don't trouble," said each one of the councilors, with but little variation of formula or mode of expression.

SHEPHERD AND SHEEP

"Thank you very much, gentlemen. I am greatly obliged to you for your promises," replied Rabbi Eisenmann, bowing to each one in all humility. "Herr Burgomaster — that yarn of the man in the bath-tub — capital, wasn't it?"

A loud, reminiscent guffaw answered him, his own ringing out clear above the others' laughter. He waited till the rest had gone on a little distance in front, and then started off home by himself, striking down into a side-street to make sure against coming into touch with the bulk of the party.

His own dwelling lay pretty well in a line with that of the others; but he had his own reasons for parting company with them at the tavern-door. was thus that he would convey to the high dignitaries of the town that though they might favor him with their good-fellowship round the beer-table, he, the Jew, dared not presume to make this familiarity extend to the immemorially Roman Catholic streets. That would flatter their self-respect; and, again, unrestrained by his presence, they could more freely accentuate on each other's minds the good impression left there by a man, be he Jew or Christian, who had bidden the niggardly and jealously guarded hogsheads discharge themselves in a generous flood till you forgot whether you were the hogshead or the drinker. That was diplomatic. thought Rabbi Eisenmann, and God knew he had need of all the astuteness for which he could tax a mind which usually spurned sophisticated methods and crooked ways! He was playing a difficult game.

GOD'S REMNANTS

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How difficult it was he had plenty of time to recapitulate to himself as he stepped along wearily through the breathlessly sultry summer night; and so much depended on it — O God, so much! In fact, everything: his livelihood, his career in the world, the welfare of those near and dear to him.

It was a strange series of events which had brought him to this pass. To hark back to the verv beginning: he had lived in the place of his birth, the pocket edition of a town in Russian Poland. some fifty miles from the German frontier, till he was past his seventeenth year. He had been happy enough there, passing his days and nights in the study of Sacred Writ and the brain-bewildering explanations of the Commentaries, watching the busy spiders spin their cunning festoons amid the rafters of the Talmud School gables, and himself spinning his own web of day-dreams of the golden future that was to be his, and earning a casual meal here and there by teaching Hebrew to the children of his hosts.

Then the marriage-brokers of the place, seeing that he was a likely young man, and one who could be made a marketable article of matrimonial traffic, laid their greedy eyes upon him; and, before he quite knew what had happened, being at the time greatly preoccupied in a knotty controversy with one of his fellow-students, he found himself wedded and all to Rehle, the only child of Reb Nathan the corn-chandler, a man fairly well dowered with the world's goods.

That was not such a bad state of affairs, young Jacob Eisenmann could not help admitting to him-

self when he came to consider the true inwardness of the matter. Regular meals, with second helpings; a pretty, young wife — she really was pretty, thought Jacob when he eventually found pluck enough to have a good look at her; a warm overcoat and calf-leather goloshes for the winter — could God in Frenchland, as the saying was, have more cause for being satisfied?

For three or four months lasted this halcyon tide, and then Jacob Eisenmann felt a distinct though subtle change coming over him. The overcoat was not quite so warm; the second helpings stuck in his throat. Little Rehle was still as pretty — nay, she was even more than that: she was good and true, a jewel which deserved a grander casket than it had found in his own tome-encumbered heart, although she would have given him but poor thanks had he dared to suggest such a thing to her.

But whether it was the new responsibility which engendered in him a new sense of dignity, or whether it was that the inner cravings for light and air and space which had slumbered in him all these years, ignored and suppressed, began to clamor for their rightful place in his scheme of life — enough that he awoke one morning with the unalterable resolve to turn his back on the dusty precincts of the Talmud School, on the spiders' spinnings and his own cobwebs, and to strike out into the vast world beyond the frontier, with its unnumbered possibilities, where it was given to every man to perform that greatest miracle of all — to make of himself what he would.

Of course, little Rehle fainted when he told her

of his intention to leave her behind in her father's care, and when she came-to she cried woe and misery so that the neighbors came running in with the fire-buckets; but presently she began to see the case in a more optimistic light, and her glistening cheeks, as she kissed Jacob good-by, did not imply the moisture of grief, but pride and confidence in her adventurous young husband, who was faring forth into the prosperous land of the Aschkenazim, where, as report said, sugar was cheap and all the women went about arrayed in dresses of silk.

So Jacob Eisenmann came to the first goal of his desire, the world-famous Rabbinic Seminary at Breslau. There he remained for four years, and then he made his second stride on the road to fortune in being appointed full-fledged Rabbiner to a fair-sized community in Pomerania. The first thing he naturally did was to send for his wife Rehle, who came, bringing with her their four-year-old son Moses, and had great difficulty in recognizing in the well-groomed, sprucely attired young cleric the whilom draggle-tailed beggar-student of the Talmud School.

With marvelous speed and facility Rehle accommodated her old-fashioned provincial ways to the politer and more finicky habits of her new surroundings. Rehle became Germanized into Rahel, as did Moses into Moritz; but apart from that she presented no change to her husband. She was still to him the priceless jewel in an unworthy casket. With that guarantee for a cloudless enviable future, they lived three perfect years, till that dread day when the thunderbolt came crashing into their little

paradise and sent them forth on a panic-stricken, perilous pilgrimage into the unknown.

It was the time when the German Government, stung to an access of patriotic nepotism, resolved that none but its own native-born children should dwell under the august protection of the Imperial Black Eagle. From end to end of the Fatherland the watchword suddenly rang out: "Germany for the Germans!" An exception, of course, was made in the case of those aliens who through length of residence and legal documentary formula had acquired rights of citizenship; but to those who had not been so provident scant courtesy and a shorter shrift was meted out.

Most rigorous of all were the measures adopted against those who were subjects of the Czar, and more especially Jewish subjects. Whether it was an ironic act of reprisal for the discomforts and disabilities which the Russian Orthodox Church had inflicted on German Protestants resident in the domains of the Holy Russian Empire, or whether Germany was eager to proclaim to the world that it was capable of evolving in Herr Stöcker as choice a specimen of latter-day civilization as Russia had done in Monsieur Pobiedonostsef, must be left to the impartial historian.

The matter only concerns us in so far as Rabbiner Jacob Eisenmann was a Russian Jewish subject, and as such in the category of those whom it was a most sacred duty to proscribe and cast forth; and so, when one fine morning the chief commissioner of police called upon the Herr Rabbiner and asked him to be so good as to allow him a cursory



inspection of his naturalization papers or any other credentials of residence he might possess, the Herr Rabbiner could only gasp and tremble and look dumbly at his wife Rahel, who dumbly looked back at him. The next morning their doom arrived in the shape of a bureaucratically worded notice to quit the town within fourteen days on pain of being treated as political offenders. So Jacob Eisenmann gathered up himself, his wife, and his two children, the younger of whom had arrived a year ago, and set out in quest of a new home, relying on God to guide his footsteps aright amid the pit-falls and ambushes of the wicked.

Indeed, he had need of all the uplifting trust that was in him to carry him through that dread period of vagabondage and homeless wandering. The most obvious resort he might be considered to have had, the return to his native land, was only an exchange of the frying-pan for the fire. He had not performed his years of military service; and, once back on Russian soil, he would be subject to all the fearsome pains and penalties of the deserter.

Then, again, his innate racial steadfastness of purpose, so often mistaken for mere obstinacy, urged him to cling, so far as he could, to this stepmotherly land of his adoption—first, in order to vindicate his right to the elementary privileges of a human being, of which it was attempted to deprive him; and, secondly, because he felt that here, and here only, could he achieve the plan of life he had mapped out for himself and fulfill his destiny of becoming what he intended to become.

Then commenced a desperate struggle for gain-

ing time, a grasping at straws, a slipping through loopholes, an unequal contest with unfeeling redtape and heartless officialdom. They journeyed from town to town, being allowed in each place, as birds of passage, a respite of one, two, sometimes three weeks; after which the commissioner of police came, asked for their credentials, and packed them off to go through the same process of elusion, detection, and expulsion at their next halting-place.

But as though to encourage them in the belief of their ultimate success, they had been attended at the very outset of their odyssey by a great stroke of good fortune. Two days before they left Pomerania the patrimony due to Rahel on the death of her father, who had not survived the departure of his only child from under his roof for more than a year or so, reached her hands — that is, all that portion of it which had successfully escaped the grasp of contesting claimants and defending lawyers. It amounted to three thousand thalers, and that was what enabled them to carry on their policy of temporizing, with the attendant outlay of expensive hotel bills, tippings, and petty briberies.

At last their wanderings had brought them to Ostrokov. Here an unforeseen incident marred the routine of their program — namely, the falling ill of Rahel and the younger child. But, not unlike other calamities, this one proved a blessing in disguise. When the police commissioner came at the end of a fortnight with the customary order of removal, he was confronted by the professional authority of a doctor, who demanded a respite of at least another week. The police commissioner there-

upon flew into a huff, and, to prove conclusively that his powers were greater than those of a mere family practitioner, refused the week's respite and granted instead a prolongation of stay for the space of three full calendar months.

Here was Rabbi Eisenmann's chance and he seized it avidly. He had not been altogether inactive, even in the course of his peregrinations; but the numerous changes of address had rendered any systematic action very difficult. Now, with the prospect of three clear months at his disposal, he drew up an organized plan of campaign. He flung forth petition after petition; he bombarded the heads of districts, the prefects of departments, the governors of provinces, the chairmen of ecclesiastical councils, the Imperial Chancellor, the Em-At the very beginning the Jewish peror himself. community, their hearts brimming over with pity, had appointed him to the vacant post of rabbi, not temporarily but in perpetuum, so as to strengthen his position by pretending that in their minds at least there existed not the faintest doubt as to his right of domicile or his ability to prove the justice Then, at last, at last, some twenty of his claim. days before the expiration of his leave of stay, came back the decision of the Minister of the Interior, intimating that Herr Rabbiner Eisenmann would be granted a patent of naturalization on condition that, within the limit of his period of residence, the town council of Ostrokov consented to put him on their list of burgesses.

That certainly was a great point gained, inasmuch as it converted the deal with unseen, intan-

gible possibilities into a deal with what was actual and personal; but still victory seemed as far off as ever. To begin with, the corporation of Ostrokov nearly exploded with pride at the reflection that the Imperial Chancellory had, as it were, delegated to it a high Government function. They were almost certain to make the little molehill of responsibility into a mountain which the Herr Rabbiner might, or might not, be able to climb.

Apart from that, too, they were not in the most charitable of moods. Trade had not been flourishing of late, for there had been a long-continued drought, and the peasants from the neighboring villages, instead of coming into the town to make their usual purchases, had stayed at home nursing each other's anxiety for the jeopardized harvest. But the real difficulty in the matter had been made clear to Rabbi Eisenmann by his trusty counselor and well-wisher, Herr Isaac Friedenthal, the senior warden of the congregation.

"I am afraid, Herr Rabbiner," the kindly old man had told him, shaking his head sadly, "that you can count on very little help from us. You have, as you know, our sympathies and moral support; but that is as far as we can go. We are not a powerful community, and our local influence is almost nil. We are constantly made to feel that we are living here only on sufferance; we are planted in a very hotbed of race-hatred, and we can never be sure when we may be made the victims of its worst manifestations. To be frank, the chief reason why we wish to attach you to ourselves is because we recognize that in time you may become

for us a tower of strength and protection. If we interfered for you now we might be only injuring your chances. We have done all for you we could; but for the rest you must trust to your luck."

Rabbi Eisenmann hung his head as he saw his chief pillar of support crumbling to the ground before his eyes. He had not expected this. He had counted much on the coöperation of his co-religionists; as he now summed up the situation he could not help admitting that their plea to be excused was a valid one. So he was once more thrown back on his own resources. The next instant the thought of what he had already achieved, and the deduction he might draw from that for the future, made him stand upright once more.

"Thank you for not encouraging me to false hopes, Herr Friedenthal," he said quietly. "You have done me one great service already by telling me how and where I stand. I therefore ask you to do me another, by permitting me to deal with this matter according to my own judgment."

"Certainly, certainly, Herr Rabbiner."

"No, no, Herr Friedenthal; I want you to understand to what you are agreeing. I may, in the working of my plan, have to adopt certain measures which may appear questionable in a man in my walk of life."

"We trust you, Herr Rabbiner; and, besides, this is clearly a case where the end justifies the means, as our tormenters, the Jesuits, used to say."

"Yes; and having suffered so much by the cruelty of our enemies, I suppose it is only fair

we should profit a little by their philosophy," added Jacob Eisenmann grimly.

To be brief, the questionable methods he had hinted at were the gatherings at the "Lame Horse," the fashionable resort of the town. He knew that the only way of gaining access to the hearts of these men in whose hands his fate lay was through their gullets. It was a clumsy form of bribery; but theirs were clumsy, slow-working brains, and it might pass with them. So he rammed his self-respect into his pocket; and, to make more room for it there, he took out the thalers in handfuls.

That was how these "Lame Horse" symposia had become an almost nightly institution, with Eisenmann playing the part of buffoon as well as that of the horn of plenty, himself gulping down as best he could the broad jests and half-veiled unseemlinesses to which he was treated in return, together with the vile fumes of the foul-smelling churchwarden pipes. If only there would be some use in it all! If only the end would vindicate the means! Sometimes he thought it would, and then again he thought it would not, until, sick at heart and wearied of brain by the merciless contest between hope and doubt, he resolved to cease hoping and doubting, and to leave the future to be its own prophet.

H

Involuntarily Rabbi Eisenmann now hastened his steps as he looked up and saw he was passing the town church. In the top-story of the ad-



joining vicarage a light was still burning, silhouetting the shadow of a man grotesquely against the ceiling. That was Pastor Engzelius, busy probably with his sermon for the ensuing Sunday. Rabbi Eisenmann battled down the bitter feelings that reared themselves in his heart as he wondered what the reverend pastor's text might be. Was it charity and kindliness to the helpless and distressed? Eisenmann pictured to himself over and over again the one and only interview he had had with the Herr Pastor.

He had called on him and begged him as a colleague-in-God, as well as by reason of the professional esprit de corps which ought to exist between them, to use his influence to secure the Rabbiner's admission as burgess. The Herr Pastor had looked at him superciliously, and had informed him that, being a conscientious servant of God, Father and Son, he confined himself strictly to the performance of his duties, which were the spiritual care of his flock, and that he on principle never interfered in matters municipal. He was also much surprised at the fact of the Herr Rabbiner approaching him at a time when he surely must know, it being the talk of the town, that the Herr Pastor's wife was passing through a critical stage in a severe illness; and to burden a man with extraneous troubles at a period of great domestic affliction showed distinct bad taste, if not an absolute callousness of heart.

The Herr Rabbiner, refraining from the retort obvious, had most humbly apologized, and had withdrawn, cordially wishing the Frau Pastorin a speedy recovery for her own and the Herr Pastor's sake. Since then the two men had often met in the street, and had passed each other without speaking and with the most frigid interchange of outdoor civilities. Nevertheless Rabbi Eisenmann derived considerable comfort from the other's assurance of neutrality; for, despite his austere exterior and unsympathetic demeanor, Pastor Engzelius could not but impress one as being a man whose word was his bond.

Softly the Rabbiner tiptoed into the house; but his precaution was unnecessary, for as he entered the sitting-room he was faced by Rahel with an eager, "Well, what news?"

He looked with affectionate displeasure at the face, still pretty, but setting forth the tale of anxious months in shadows and angles.

"I told you not to wait up for me, Rahel," he said gently.

She gave him a look of reproach. "Do you expect me to sleep, dear, while I know that you are away battling, with your life almost, against our evil destiny? Were you satisfied with what happened to-night?"

Eisenmann shrugged his shoulders wearily. "Satisfied? I suppose I ought to be. Anybody else would perhaps consider it a distinct sign of progress. The burgomaster drank three tankards more than he did last time, and Herr Schwefelgeist slapped me on the back and said I deserved a better fate than to be a Jew. At any rate they promised me that the meeting would be held as soon as they could conveniently fit it in with their business arrangements — whatever that may mean."

"We have only ten days more," sighed Rahel.

"And then —"

"And then—you mean if their decision is against us?" interrupted Eisenmann. "And then, Rahel, I tell you, we must bow to our doom and make the best of things. We have enough money left to take us to England or even to America, and people say that God lives there as well."

Rahel threw up her hands and shuddered. "What! cross the water, and perhaps never pray at my parents' graves again?"

"They will forgive you for it, dear. They would be the first to tell you that they gladly make way for the duty we owe to the living. Did you see, dear, that Moritz did his home-lessons properly? I have always considered it a happy omen that they allowed him to attend the municipal school during the time of our provisional stay. I think we have shown ourselves grateful enough by the way we have kept him to his books."

A troubled look had come over Rahel's face at the mention of little Moritz. "No, we cannot complain of his industry," she began slowly. And then it seemed as if she were deliberating whether to make any addition to or qualification of her remark. In the end she closed her lips and kept silent.

Eisenmann, wrapped in his own thoughts, noticed nothing of her hesitation. Taking his wife's hand, he pressed it with affectionate warmth as he said, "Yes, please God, he will make us a good son. And I know also to whom the credit for that will be due."

However desirous the mother might be to keep secret what had occurred that night in connection with little Moritz, the lad himself made concealment impossible and unnecessary the very next evening. The Rabbiner was keeping at home; there was no symposium at the "Lame Horse"— one of the councilors had killed a pig that day, and the corporation was celebrating the event at his house. Little Moritz, under his father's supervision, had written "Labor is the sweets of life" seven times in his copy-book, and done his two division sums and proved them by multiplication; he then had eaten his supper, said his grace, finished his Hebrew reading lesson and the translation of the usual five verses of the Pentateuch—he was already up to the sixth chapter in Genesis—and then had duly gone off to bed.

Two or three minutes later, enough for him to undress, there came from the adjoining room in which he slept the sound of his childish treble uttering words which made Rabbiner Eisenmann start up and stare about him like a man awakening from Then he softly stole to the door, a bad dream. looked in, and — ves, sure enough, there was his little son Moritz kneeling by his bedside in his clean white night-gown, his hands clasped in prayer, his words clear and distinct and heartfelt, leaving no doubt that he understood their import: "Good Jesu, Thou who shepherdest the little children, watch over me in my slumbers, and make me to love Thee with a contrite spirit, for the sake of God Thy Father, for I have sinned grievously, and in Thee is all our salvation -"

"Moritz!" the Rabbiner called to him in a hoarse whisper.

The little fellow turned, and, seeing his father's look of agonized amazement, stopped abruptly. At the same time Rahel pushed her way in and caught him in her arms.

"Who told you to pray like that?" asked Eisenmann, his voice harsh and steady.

Little Moritz, frightened out of his life by the unnatural tone, began to whimper piteously. Eisenmann had to repeat his question.

"The Herr Pastor taught me the prayer, father dear, in the Bible-class, me and Joseph Kaufmann, and Adolf Abrahamson, and all the other Jewish boys; and you always told me I was to obey my teachers in everything, father dear."

Eisenmann nodded, and with a curt, "See to him, Rahel," walked back into the sitting-room, and measured its length and breadth for a little while with quick, impatient strides. Then he took pen and paper, sat down at the table, and wrote furiously. Rahel came in again presently, having soothed poor little trembling Moritz to sleep, sat down opposite, and watched Eisenmann silently. She knew quite well what and to whom he was writing, and she might have had her own views on the matter; but she never committed the grievous error of foisting her counsel upon her husband till he asked her. That was how she had retained his love more than by her pretty face and winning ways; and this time it was surely a case for his own discretion to handle.

The Herr Rabbiner's letter, of course, was to the Herr Pastor. He made a preamble to the effect that he preferred sending this written communication, because he would not run the risk of causing the Herr Pastor domestic inconvenience by a personal call. But he hoped the Herr Pastor would give this letter the considerate attention he would no doubt have accorded to a verbal representation.

The circumstance that Herr Engzelius had included some Jewish boys in the New Testament class without first consulting their parents on the point, the letter proceeded, was, of course, merely an oversight, and had only to be brought to the Herr Pastor's notice in order to ensure its non-occurrence on any future occasion. He was quite certain that the Herr Pastor would take this friendly remonstrance in a proper spirit, and not consider it an act of supererogation on the part of the Herr Rabbiner, who, in spite of his appointment being of only a provisional — nay, even precarious — nature, dared not, during his period of office, relax in his vigilance over the spiritual welfare of his congregation. both great and small. In conclusion. Eisenmann. either giving way to his anger or to emphasize the fact that the Herr Pastor's legal standpoint in the matter was insecure, reminded him that "in all cases of this description referred to the District Religious Education Consistory, the decision had been that the children of Nonconformists should be exempted from instruction which might be contrary to the tenets of their faith."

Eisenmann enveloped and sealed the letter, and sent it round to the Herr Pastor's house, scarcely a five minutes' leisurely walk. Within a quarter of an hour the messenger returned. Eagerly Eisenmann received the envelope, which bore no superscription, wondering greatly at the rapidity with which Herr Engzelius must have framed and penned his reply, yet drawing a good augury from his dispatch. But a single glance into the open envelope informed him how it was that the Herr Pastor had managed to reply with such lightning speed. The Herr Pastor's reply was the Herr Rabbiner's own letter torn into a hundred bits.

Rahel saw too, and recognized the contumely of the contemptuous ultimatum; but though, again, she might have had her own views on the matter, and might even have urged the inopportuneness of taking further action for the present, she said nothing as she saw her husband resume his seat at the writing-table, this time with tight-set lips and an indignantly shaking hand. Her husband was about to do his duty: dared she stand between him and that?

So the Herr Rabbiner wrote his memorial to the District Religious Education Consistory, giving the details of the case in all unvarnished nakedness, not minimizing things by a nail's-breadth, even going to the length of describing the manner in which his well-founded protest had been received and rejected. He posted his letter that same evening, and then went round to his congregants to inform them of what he had done.

They received the intelligence, as he had half-expected, with some shrugging of shoulders and much shaking of heads; but, at any rate, he induced them to aid him by a policy of masterly inactivity—namely, by keeping their children away from school till the decision of the District Consistory

had arrived. It might take a week, a month, a year — possibly, as they all knew, he might not be there to see the result of his action. Then they would be free to do as they deemed fit. For the present, however — the argument carried more weight with them than it seemed to have done with the Herr Pastor — he was their spiritual guide, and as such he had to do his duty to them.

Two, three, four days passed, and then on the morning of the fifth the Herr Rabbiner received a politely worded request from the Herr Pastor to call on him some time during the day. Eisenmann's conscience smote him. Why had he not waited a little? Why had he sent off his passionate denunciation in such hot haste? Engzelius, too, had evidently thought better of it, and was willing to come to an amicable settlement; surely that was the only construction to be put on the overtures implied in his invitation.

The Rabbiner's regrets redoubled on entering the Pastor's house, where he was welcomed in the sitting-room by the Frau Pastorin, a sweet-faced woman, pale and withered, her hair prematurely whitened by long suffering, half-seated, half-reclining in her invalid's chair. Cordially she asked him to sit down; the Herr Pastor was in his study, and would be down presently. No, she was not feeling so well again lately; the terrible heat was torturing her cruelly — not a drop of rain had now fallen for ten weeks; if only the rain would come it might save her. The first thing she had made up her mind to do as soon as she could move out would be to pay a call on the Herr Rabbiner's wife, of whom

she had heard many good things, and especially she believed in people who followed the same profession standing on a friendly footing towards one another, regardless of such artificial distinctions as creed and nationality. Were we not all children of one God? Ah, there was the Herr Pastor—

Eisenmann rose quickly, making a keen scrutiny of the Pastor's face as the latter entered. What the Frau Pastorin had said had been so significant that the Rabbiner's hopes of a thorough reconciliation had become almost a certainty; and, therefore, he was considerably taken aback to see the clean-shaven, austere features as austere and cast-iron as ever, with two deep furrows, caused by the wrinkling of eyebrows, running along the breadth of the forehead, the unmistakable trail of some fierce storm of anger that was sweeping across the man.

"Good-morning, Herr Pastor; you see I have not lost any time," said Eisenmann, smiling nevertheless and holding out his hand to the other

less, and holding out his hand to the other.

"And therefore I shall not lose any time either," said Engzelius icily, ignoring the proffered greeting. "I have certain news, Herr Rabbiner, which, although I am fully entitled to hold it secret, I think it right and fitting to acquaint you with. You will be glad to hear, Herr Rabbiner, that your appeal to the District Consistory has been a brilliant success. They have addressed to me with miraculous promptness a reprimand — I may term it a most severe reprimand —"

"I regret exceedingly, Herr Pastor—" stammered Eisenmann, flushing up.

"I dare say you regret it, Herr Rabbiner," con-

tinued Engzelius in the same icy tone; "but you should have considered that before. When a man throws down a challenge he must expect to have it taken up, especially if his opponent is stronger than he. And that I am stronger than you, Herr Rabbiner, I think I shall be able to prove, if not altogether to your satisfaction."

A deeper look of pain had come over the Frau Pastorin's face as she listened to the strange colloquy.

"Robert, dear, I don't know what the Herr Rabbiner has done; but I am sure he meant it for the best," she pleaded gently.

The vicar acknowledged her intercession with a gesture of vexation, and turned full on Eisenmann. "Honestly, sir, I fail to see what you thought to gain by your interference. Presumably you wished to impress me with an exhibition of your steadfastness to your official duties, which brooked no delay in your taking the step you have taken, not even the diplomatic delay of a few days till your position here might possibly be assured. Your attempt missed fire, and I am not ashamed to say so. first consideration "- unconsciously he gave expression to the sentiment poor Rahel had been too loyal to utter —" your first consideration should have been for your wife and children. If ever there was a case where charity should in all justice have begun at home, it was here. You may appear to yourself a hero; to me you simply appear a fool. And I have no patience with fools."

- "Robert!" again pleaded the invalid.
- "Please, Emma," remonstrated the vicar a little



more sharply, "the Herr Rabbiner and I are quite capable of settling this matter by ourselves.— Are we not, Herr Rabbiner? To be frank with you, Herr Eisenmann, you have forfeited all your chances of acquiring the citizenship in my parish. I had fully intended to preserve my neutral attitude. I even made no comment when, for the attaining of your object, you adopted measures which, to say the least, were unworthy of a minister of religion. But now — well, you see I have taken up your challenge."

"Herr Pastor," replied Eisenmann, his nether lip trembling, "I will not say — God forbid!— that your measures, too, are a little undignified. But I did not expect that you would divert the original cause of our quarrel into a side-issue. I thought that at least you would explain to me—"

"I owe you no explanation," retorted the other stiffly. "You may put whatever construction you please on the original cause of our quarrel, as you term it. Perhaps in doing what I did I merely intended a test of your disposition and character. If so, you did not stand the test well. However, all that is a matter of the past. I will only repeat that you are trying a futile experiment, and counsel you, for the sake of your wife and children, to husband your energy — and money. It is hardly probable that you will succeed in undermining my authority with my parishioners in the four or five days you have still to remain amongst them."

"Four or five days!" cried Eisenmann hotly, galled into open revolt by the acid callousness of his adversary. "That may not be as you think,

Herr Pastor. With the Government's goodwill to support me, it ought not to be impossible for me to secure a prolongation of domicile here until "—

"Until you have drunk the corporation into compliance," smiled Engzelius. "You make an exceedingly bad diplomat, Herr Rabbiner. You are showing up all your trump-cards. To your new challenge, therefore, I reply that I have come more and more to the conclusion that Ostrokov is not big enough to hold the two of us, and that consequently, while I am vicar here, you shall never be rabbi. That is my last word. I wish you a very good morning, Herr Rabbiner."

III

Eisenmann went out, but not before he had heard another supplicatory "Robert!" from the white lips inside. He tottered home, his thoughts all in a tangle, and it was not until he saw the dumbly questioning eyes of his wife upon him that he realized the full sorrow of the tidings he had brought her.

"Forgive me, dear," was all he could say, standing before her with bowed head and clasped hands.

True to her habit, Rahel asked no questions; but she flung her arms about his shoulders and murmured, "Never mind; God will help."

Yes, God would help, thought Eisenmann, grimly setting his teeth; but meanwhile he would not let the grass grow under his feet. A reunion had been fixed for that evening at the "Lame Horse,"

and Eisenmann knew that it afforded him his last and ultimate opportunity. Well, he would seize it and drain it dry to the very dregs—the metaphor was appropriate—of its possibilities. He would throw all scruples to the wind; he would stop at nothing. Unless he to-night forestalled his enemy, the vicar, all his toilsomeness, all the weary striving of the last three arduous months, would be in vain.

Yes, he would fight hard to-night. If it cost the last coin in his pocket, if he spent the last breath in his body, he would force these mule-headed stupids to do his will. He would bribe, cajole, threaten; he would ransack his imagination for all the dire consequences that could befall a recalcitrant community which sets its face against the thinly disguised wishes of the Government. He would insist that they should constitute themselves into a formal meeting of the town council, and ratify his admission to citizenship there and then. He would — ay, he would prove to the Herr Pastor that right was not always on the side of might.

The long, hot summer's day crept wearily to its close. Towards evening Eisenmann said his vesper prayers with even more than customary devoutness, took a handful of gold pieces from his sadly attenuated store — he must be provided, for probably it would mean Moselle and champagne to-night — and repaired to the "Lame Horse." There he sat down in his usual place, not noting the look of mingled malice and regret with which the proprietor received him, and waited.

It surprised him a good deal that he should be

the first arrival; but perhaps, he thought, in his anxiety he had come inordinately early. Yet eight o'clock struck, and the half-hour after, and still nobody had come. By nine o'clock Eisenmann could no longer conceal from himself that his adversary had, after all, got the better of him. It was, of course, the pastor's doing that no one had come — not even Notarius Schwefelgeist, who had been heard more than once to declare his regret that he had not been born a hundred years ago, when the devil was still alive, so that he might make over to him his immortal soul in exchange for unlimited beer.

At a quarter-past nine Eisenmann got up and walked out of the "Lame Horse," knowing that he would never set foot there again. Now he was convinced that his doom was finally sealed he felt unnaturally calm. After all, he was an Oriental; fate had conquered him. Kismet! But he would not go home just yet; the extra hour of blessed ignorance in which he would leave his poor wife would probably be set down to his credit in heaven.

So he strolled on and on till he came to the outskirts of the town, wrapping the solitude round him luxuriously like a garment. At last he halted, for his way was barred by the little brook which, gently purling, cozily crooning, lapped the edge of the town. Now that he had apparently finished with the great things of life, reflected Eisenmann, it was only due that he should give a thought or two to its pettinesses, its indifferences. For instance, the topography of Ostrokov. He looked back. It was really beautifully situated, this cruel, inhospitable place which had refused him sanctuary. There it lay below him, bathed in the generous light of the half-moon, cradled primly, self-sufficiently, in a sloping hollow with an almost grotesque tilt towards its lower end.

At the back of it started up the high hill-tops, fringed thickly with gnarled giants of oak having branches that seemed to brush the skies, and roots that seemed to strike down into the depths of the On the other side of the brook rose a centuries. wall of rock sheer and steep, as though it was there that creation had been bidden to halt: and between the town and that end-of-the-world wall. the two bound together by a bridge strongly riveted and solid of masonry - yes, between the two flowed the little brook, now coy, now petulant, tripping, running, bounding with long, lusty leaps, a thing of never-ending self-delight, until a mile or so farther down it flung itself joyously upon the broad bosom of Mother Warthe, the full, strong river of which it was a tov tributary.

Eisenmann took out his handkerchief and dried his forehead. How heavily leaden was the stillness! Only from above came a grating swish, swish, a dull, monotonous sound, where a sawmill was busily working on in a sullen, automaton fashion; but above the grating swish Eisenmann seemed to hear another sound, a piteous cry of white, hard-drawn lips, the wail of an agonized soul begging relief for its poor tortured body. "If only the rain would come it might save me!" The plaintive voice seemed close at his ear; he seemed to see the frail frame writhing on its bed of sickness,

the hollow chest heaving, gasping desperately for a whiff of the life-giving air.

If only the rain would come! Eisenmann's eves struggled hard against the crowding tears. Poor agonized soul; poor tortured body! And then, in the hearing of the frivolous little brook, which seemed to gurgle back at him its mockery, he began to recite from memory, as far as he could remember them, the prayers for rain that go up in the synagogue on the Seventh Day of Tabernacles, concluding with the jubilatory outcry: "He causes the great wind to blow and the rain to rush in torrents." So Eisenmann prayed for the Frau Pastorin, the stricken wife of his adversary, forgetting that prayers have wings, and that, as with all winged things, the mode and bearings of their flight are but rarely regulated by human understanding and human intent.

So three more days passed, bringing down the remainder of Eisenmann's stay to its narrowest margin. He might almost have considered it a source of consolation that the depression which prevailed in his household rested in fullest measure upon the whole town. Life and movement in the place had come to a standstill. Man and beast and nature groaned beneath the burden of the phenomenal heat, which, instead of abating, had increased from hour to hour, and the wonder was that it had not long ago touched suffocation-point. The Eisenmanns, in a way, were better off than the rest, because they were compelled to occupy themselves, and so distract their attention from the physical discomforts of the hour by making preparations for their impending departure. The Rabbiner had already written to Hamburg to arrange for lodgings there in order to be as near as possible to the place of embarkation if they were eventually forced to put into effect their last resource — the crossing of the seas to more hospitable shores.

At last everything was packed and ready for transport. It was Friday night, and their departure had been fixed for the following evening, at the termination of the Sabbath. For the last time but one Eisenmann had conducted the service in the synagogue. The humble, unpretentious House of God had grown very dear to him, and he knew that his heart would feel heaviest at the moment when he would bid it farewell on the morrow.

And now the Rabbiner and his wife — the children were in bed — were sitting over their simple supper, the table spick and spruce in all its Sabbath finery; for, come what might, the Sabbath To Rahel, indeed, the must not be dishonored. room had never looked so bewilderingly resplendent, because the two stearine tapers, bent and dripping though they were in the all-conquering heat, had blazed out into a hundred-crown candelabrum - so at least the crystalline mist through which she gazed at them made it appear to her. The curtains had been decorously drawn, and therefore neither she nor Eisenmann had seen the strange light which earlier in the evening had filled the spaces without.

The sun had gone down in a fierce, rebellious splendor, and now, a full hour after its setting, a

weird, coppery glare streamed down in a broad, straight sheet upon the horizon. Far, far off a tiny speck, no bigger than a child's hand, had appeared against the sky. For a quarter of an hour it remained stationary and unchanged; and then, in a moment, it had suddenly bulged out into a thick, voluminous cloud, from which, after another and much briefer interval, there rolled out another and yet bulkier cloud; and from there onward the blue-black masses of darkness billowed along the heavens, as though to shut off from the watchful eyes of God what now was about to ensue on earth.

So it was that neither Eisenmann nor Rahel had witnessed anything of the splendidly terrible transformation on high; and therefore neither of them, taken suddenly and unawares, could repress a cry of terror as a dazzling javelin of flame shot past the window, followed instantly by a deafening crash that seemed to set the world rocking. Before they could recover breath, another javelin hurtled by and a second roar ravenously swallowed up the echoes of the first. After that came flash and crash, flash and crash, one upon the other in ruthless, rhythmical sequence.

With a drawn, shamefaced smile at Rahel, Eisenmann rose, and reaching down from the bookshelf his copy of the Pentateuch, laid it upon the table, and with an unsteady hand sprinkled upon the open page a handful of salt. Rahel threw him a grateful look, knowing well that it was mainly in consideration for her that her husband observed the ancient custom of their race to conjure off and make innocuous the peril of the lightning. Eag-

erly Eisenmann listened: would it never come? Ah, yes! there it was, the sharp, brittle crackling of the rain—the blessed rain that was trickling balm into the heart of the writhing woman in the vicarage; and Rahel, looking at her husband, could not understand the sudden air of triumph that had spread over his face. Why should he not feel proud? This was his achievement. The rain had come. Had he not prayed for it?

But the rain, having been so long in coming, evidently did not think it right to be satisfied with a short visit. An hour later the brittle crackling that had been as the voice of newly-lit fuel had grown to the angry howl of a gigantic furnace. Husband and wife sat clasping each other's hands, the one seeking to reassure the other by this the most expressive language of love. The Rabbiner at last broke the silence.

"We should not complain, dear," he said, with a bitter smile; "we are at least going off with much éclat. Why, we are making history in Ostrokov. This will be spoken of as 'the great thunderstorm on the night before we drove the Rabbiner away."

Rahel opened her lips to make reply; but she shut them again with a snap, as it were, and the grip of her hand on her husband's became frantic. He, too, sitting up in tense alertness, showed the sudden alarm that had come upon them. There had been no thunderclap, and yet both had felt the ponderous boom which this time had really set the world rocking.

"I — I thought the house shook," stammered Eisenmann.

Rahel nodded corroboration, unable to utter a sound. The Rabbiner sprang up, and disengaging his hand, hurried to the window, and tore back Before him was a sight that made his the curtain. heart give one great bound and then suddenly stand The roadway had disappeared entirely, and the pavement itself was barely visible beneath the three inches of water that covered it; and along the swirling waterway between the two rows of houses whirled a confused mass of logs both great and small, half-grown trees, pieces of furniture, kitchen utensils, hedges, and thatch-work — a fearful conglomeration. It was one of the largest logs that, like a battering-ram, had impinged against the house and set it shaking from basement to gable. In the distance lanterns and blazing pitch-torches were seen to hurry, and the indistinct hum of terrified crowds spoke of some dire catastrophe.

"I cannot stay here. I must go out, Rahel," said Eisenmann, pale to the lips.

With a scream of terror she flung herself upon him, clinging to him desperately; then, as though on second thoughts, she pushed him from her, and with both hands to her face went within where her two children slept, in token that he might do as he thought fit. Eisenmann gave another glance through the window, and saw that no immediate danger threatened his loved ones; then he hurried out to see what peril was impending for these strangers.

Carefully wading and evading the swift-darting objects bearing down in his path, he made his way towards the upper part of the town, where the panic

and commotion seemed to have gathered to a head. Soon he passed out into one of the main streets, where he came upon an excited crowd of men all thronging in the same direction. The one frantic cry among them was, "The brook! the brook!" Eisenmann pushed past them, quickly outdistancing them, so as to learn for himself the meaning of that cry.

A quarter of an hour later he had climbed the slope near to the spot where he had stood three nights ago. God, how different the scene was! Now, too, he saw at a glance the fatal bearing the brook had on the destiny of the town. The lower end of it was running sparsely, with scarcely more than an inch or so of water to its bed; but in the upper part, the part above the bridge, it had become a mighty torrent rushing headlong from the oakbearded hill-tops, dashing down madly as far as the bridge, and, finding no thoroughfare there, overflowing in a broad cataract upon its left bank the right was guarded by the steep rock-wall down into the hollow in which the town nestled. for the space underneath the bridge had become dammed up. A large stack of logs piled by the side of the sawmill above had been snatched up in the embrace of the flood, carried down to the bridge, and there, in the wild pell-mell to find a passage, had become jammed between the uprights. Rotten twigs and large tufts of moss torn away from the hill-side had filled up the interspaces.

Eisenmann had taken his stand on the lower reach of the brook, where the foothold was comparatively safe and dry. Around him surged a number of men, the bolder spirits of the place, who had hurried to the scene of disaster and seemed to have lost their wits on the way. There they stood gazing at each other blankly, helplessly. It needed no explanation from them to tell Eisenmann what it was they apprehended.

Down at the lower end of the town stood their hay-stacks, their hen-coops, their barns crammed with the summer's garden-produce, all at the mercy of the encroaching waters; and unless the torrent were given free flow beneath the bridge into the Warthe below, gone was the year's prosperity, not counting the danger to life and limb that threatened in addition. At the back of the crowd Herr Notarius Schwefelgeist, sheltered under a huge umbrella, was running up and down excitedly asking the local fire-brigade of two and the constabulary of one what on earth, or rather on water, as was more appropriate under the circumstances, they drew their munificent salaries for if they could not rise to an emergency like this. Eisenmann felt himself jostled on one side, and a voice — the pastor's voice — was saying to him:

- "Here, my man; hold my coat. I must go and see what can be done."
- "I shall come with you, Herr Pastor," replied Eisenmann on the instant, passing on the other's coat to a bystander and taking off his own.

He had spoken the words before he himself was aware of it. He had uttered them with no motive, with no premeditation, with no bravado, with no glimmer of self-interest or possible advantage. He had made his offer because a long-smothered instinct seemed suddenly to have become alive in him. Ah, yes, that was it! He was no novice at this waterwork. He had been trained in it as a lad when he had helped his father to build the rafts on the banks of the Vistula.

Raft-making was to have been his own vocation in life, and he had never intended anything else until one fine morning he had seen his father drown before his eyes as he was punting himself to the other side of the stream on a single log. That had disgusted him somewhat with the raft business, and he had taken to becoming a scholar as an alternative. Now, strangely enough, his old craftsmanship was to stand him in good stead. It was he who first set foot on the tightly-rammed timber, and the pastor followed without a word.

"We must have ropes and poles," said Eisenmann.

"Ropes! — poles!" shouted the pastor, and in a trice the implements of rescue were ready to hand. And then began the work. It was simple work, its simplicity only equaled by its peril. It would have been impossible had not the downpour ceased, and the thunderclouds rolled away, and the clear, lambent moon played full upon the sphere of ac-So the two men, each suiting loyally the other's convenience, worked on in grim, deadly About the neck of each log was slung a earnest. noose, the other end of the rope thrown to the men ready to catch it on the bank, and then each huge piece of timber was pulled high and dry, singly and with care, for the haphazard scaffolding whereon the pastor and Eisenmann stood gave but precarious foothold, growing more and more precarious with the removal of each constituent.

On the bridge above stood the men with poles, ready to thrust off any random log, for there were many of the beams dashing in to take the place of their extricated fellows. Steadily, successfully, as though by the immediate blessing of God, proceeded the work. The finger-nails of the pastor and Eisenmann were torn and bleeding, and their arms and legs, scraped bare of skin, showed inch-long patches of the raw flesh; but not a word, save an occasional necessary question or exhortation, had passed between them all these hours, not until almost the very end, when the scaffolding had sunk to a third of its height, and the water was beginning to find vent across the diminished barrier.

The pastor was down on his hands and knees, wrestling with a more than usually unmanageable plank, when there was a shout from the men on the bridge, and he felt himself suddenly jerked back by the Rabbiner's iron grip. Engzelius looked to see the reason for the shout and the jerk; and there, where his head had been an instant ago, a huge oaken log was being desperately stemmed by the poles, which it had eluded until almost too late.

"I told you you were a fool," said the pastor gruffly. "You should have let that log batter my brains out, and then there would have been no one to oppose your becoming a burgess."

"I knew that, Herr Pastor," replied Eisenmann quietly; "but unfortunately for me I am only a fool and not a knave."

An hour later their task was accomplished. The

water was rushing freely and yet more freely beneath the bridge into the waiting river below.

"I think we may leave the brook to finish its own work now," said the pastor, stepping on to the bank.

"Just as you please, Herr Pastor," replied Eisenmann, following him.

For a few moments the Rabbiner paused irresolutely, not knowing what to do. If he stopped it might appear that he was waiting to beg their thanks. It would be a good while before they would be finished with their pastor. He had saved their hay, their hen-coops, their cabbages; he had protected them from want and starvation. He was a hero. What had he—the stranger—done? Nothing. Only just risked his life. Heavens! was it not sufficient reward for a Jew to know that by risking his life he had saved a barnful of good Christian cabbages?

And so he turned off towards home just as the pastor was being lifted up by the huzzaing multitude to be carried shoulder-high back to the vicarage. But the Rabbiner, for all that, did not go entirely unrewarded. As he raised his face to heaven to give thanks for his own deliverance from death, it was his eyes that first caught the glory of the dawning morn as it came to scatter the last lingering shadows of that ghastly night.

There was no service in the synagogue that morning, for people were far too busy sleeping off the bodily fatigue and anxiety of the past hours to have any time to attend to their spiritual repose. Eisenmann waited till eleven o'clock, but not even the

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necessary prayer-quorum of ten assembled. Well, he would, instead, make the afternoon service—which probably would be more numerously attended—the occasion of his final leave-taking from the congregation.

So he walked back home, feeling the need of a further rest, especially to prepare himself for the weariness of the night's journey that awaited him. For the first time he seemed to become aware that his walk took him past the pastor's house. Involuntarily he paused outside it. Perhaps it would be only common politeness to look in and ask how the Herr Pastor felt after the exertions of the night. Politeness cost nothing. After another little struggle he briskly entered the open corridor and knocked at the door of the sitting-room. A strange silence seemed hanging over the house.

"Come in," called the pastor.

At sight of Eisenmann he got up laboriously from the arm-chair in which he had huddled up. Great black rings were under his eyes. He looked wizened and old. He held out no hand.

"You deserve to be brought up before a magistrate and sentenced to detention," he said harshly. "Suppose something had happened to you in the night, we should have had your wife and children on the rates. What business was it of yours?"

"I knew nothing would happen to me," said the Rabbiner, meeting the other's gaze steadily.

"You knew?" and Engzelius wrinkled his brows.

"Then you are wrong, sir. Something has happened. If you will go to the burgomaster he will hand you your certificate of burgess. I made them

stop at the market-place and go into the town-hall and settle your business there."

Eisenmann gasped and grew pale. "This is a cruel jest, Herr Pastor," he stammered.

"And, therefore, it is not a jest. Look! here is my application for Muehlendorf."

"Muehlendorf?" echoed Eisenmann, bewildered.

"Yes, certainly. Why not? I am applying for the post there. Did I not pledge you my word that you would not be Rabbiner here so long as I was pastor? I presume you do not expect me to perjure myself?"

"But Muehlendorf — a tiny curacy of scarcely more than two hundred souls — what will you do? The Frau Pastorin is ailing; she requires good medical advice and expensive nourishment. I dare not accept your generosity, Herr Pastor."

"The Frau Pastorin needs no expensive nourishment. The Frau Pastorin is cured. Come, I will show you how well she sleeps."

He took Eisenmann by the hand and led him into the bedchamber. The blind was down, and the Frau Pastorin really seemed to be enjoying a most refreshing slumber.

"I knew the rain would do her good — would cure her perhaps," Eisenmann whispered joyously.

"Yes, it has done her a great deal of good. She is dead. The shock of the thunderstorm killed her. I found her like this when I came back."

Silently they walked out of the death-chamber into the glorious sunshine. On the threshold outside they paused. The pastor took the other's hand.

"You are a wonderful people, and you have a wonderful Providence watching over you," he said. Then after a slight pause he added wistfully: "Muehlendorf is not very far—if you have time, Herr Rabbiner—I may be lonely."

THE HEIGHT OF THE OCCASION

Ι

PETROV PETROVICH had been married for over three years, but that did not prevent from being still considerably interested in his wife. And therefore he noticed with great and growing apprehension that she smiled rather significantly at the red-whiskered gendarme, and that the red-whiskered gendarme smiled still more significantly back at her.

Petrov had little faith in his own powers of persuasion, and knew it was useless to attempt to make his wife see the error of her ways. And therefore he felt convinced that his only chance of restoring his domestic equanimity was to argue it out with the gendarme himself. For some time he pondered how that could be done with the maximum amount of safety and efficiency, and at last he bethought himself of a rusty old musket which lay stowed away in his lumber-room.

This musket had been in Petrov's family for nearly a hundred years, having been left behind with them by one of Napoleon's soldiers on that murderous retreat from Moscow. Petrov polished it up, lubricated the lock, and found that the weapon was still in perfect working order. That would be the best way of arguing with the

gendarme. In these troubled days of revolutionaries, of subversionists of the old law and order, anything was likely to happen. Even the elimination of the local gendarme.

So one very dark night, Petrov took his musket, ambushed himself in the very dark doorway of an empty house near the outskirts of the town, where he knew the gendarme would have to pass on his round, and waited to see what would happen.

In contrast to the blind windows of the empty house, those in the first story of the large tenement-dwelling farther up the street, showed brilliantly illuminated. And there was every good reason for that. For on this same night Tania, the only daughter of Leib Gutmann, was being betrothed to Shaya Sheratz, and there had been no such great event in the town since the new Rabbi had been installed.

Much had been expected of wealthy Leib Gutmann on the occasion, but his achievements surpassed all expectation. The rejoicings had started at four in the afternoon, and now, although it was getting well on towards midnight, the enthusiasm of the guests showed no abatement, and the store of good things seemed unending.

No,—something was running short, to wit, the musk-brandy which was the favorite beverage of Shaya's father. Tania, demure, blushing, quivering with happiness to feel the hand-clasp of her enraptured lover, noticed it and became filled with dismay. Perhaps it might be looked upon as a flaw in the preparations of the feast and might evoke a word of adverse criticism when the details of it

came to be discussed in the cold soberness of the morning. So more musk-brandy must be procured for Shaya's father instantly — or the world would come to an end. And it nearly did.

Tania looked round for Gimpel. Of course she had only to breathe the word, and Gimpel would run. Ah, there he was, right in the thick of the guests, bubbling over with mad merriment, abandoning himself in a very transport of exuberant joy. The dear, faithful fellow! Tania's eyes filled with tears. What a red-letter day this must be for him, to know his master's child entrusted safely into the keeping of the man of her heart! And presently she caught his eye — no very difficult task for her — and beckoned. With a bound or two he was at her side.

"Quick, Gimpel, some more musk-brandy! Run to Granny Gittele's and get another bottle."

Gimpel's face fell.

"To Granny Gittele's? But that's right across the common, and it's pitch dark!"

"Yes, yes, I know you don't like going out in the dark. But, Gimpel, dear, you're not going to refuse me anything to-night, are you? Because if you do,"—and she raised her forefinger in smiling menace—"if you do, I won't let you dance with me at my wedding!"

"Oh, don't say that. I'll go — I'll go at once,"

cried Gimpel eagerly.

"And don't drop the bottle for fright if you meet a ghost," Shaya called after him with a happy laugh.

Half way down the staircase Gimpel came to a

THE HEIGHT OF THE OCCASION

stop. Not in order to consider that he was, for all his thirty-three years, nothing but the errand-boy to Leib Gutmann's household, and as such duty-bound to fetch and carry as he was required. Nor again to reflect that he was once more, in addition to countless other occasions, laying himself open to ridicule for the physical cowardice which, great hulking fellow that he was, had made him the laughing-stock of the whole place.

No, he stopped, because his heart was racked with a spasm of pain as the full meaning of this betrothal-feast flashed on him. It was all very well up there among the fierce whirl of the merry-makers, whose contagious gayety had made him forget himself for a few delirious hours. But now he was alone and need wear no mask as he stood facing his own misery.

Oh, God in heaven! Was it really true that Tania, his own little Tania, now belonged to some one else? He could no longer claim any share in her. All that was left to him of her were those happy memories of the past, the delightful little secrets they had guarded in common, the childish pranks she had played on him, the help and consolation for which she had come to him in her petty troubles. He might even remember the dumb, half-unconscious adoration with which he had watched her expand into gracious womanhood.

But the future promised him nothing. All that her future would contain she would give ungrudgingly to her husband. Not only that, but not even the sight of her dear face, the sound of her happy laugh, were to be vouchsafed to him. For Shaya

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would take her away to his own distant native town
— Shaya, the robber, the interloper . . .

With a stifled sob Gimpel stumbled forward on his way. Shaya or no Shaya, he must do her bidding, or else she might really not dance with him at her wedding. And he would miss the only opportunity in his life of holding her soft lithe form close to his heart. And the rapture of it might make him die there and then, and surely that was the gladdest thing that could happen to him. For such a happy death he need not grudge Shaya a hundred happy years of life.

Ugh, how dark it was, and how lonely the street! No, there was some one coming along. Gimpel caught the clank of spurs and the rattle of a saber, and his heart sank. He would have to pass the red gendarme, who would call on him to stand by, and would clout him for pastime. Gimpel seldom escaped the gendarme without a clout. With chattering teeth he crept forward towards the oncomer.

Nearer and nearer that measured tread, heavy with the weight of authority, came to meet him, and presently the gendarme was full on top of him.

"Ah, my friend Gimpel! Stand up, you Jewish pig, won't you?"

A rough hand gripped Gimpel by the front of his coat, and tried to drag him erect on his trembling knees. Gimpel, his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth, lifted a protective arm, and then, quite suddenly—a flash and a crash, blinding, deafening, and the gendarme collapsed, a hoarse, apocopated oath on his lips, and the next instant a heavy form scurried by, impinging against the

gendarme.

For a few moments Gimpel lay very still, for he thought he was dead, and he knew it behooved all well-behaved dead people to keep very still. But suddenly he felt something oozy and warm come trickling over his hand, and with a broken scream he bounded madly to his feet, stampeding away—he did not know whither, but only away, away from that silent presence which, in its ironic gentleness, was a thousandfold more formidable than it had been in its grim, living wrath.

II

For two days and nights Gimpel skulked on the edge of the neighboring forest, feeding on roots and berries, but in reality kept alive by his panic fear and the haunting recollection of the dreadful thing that had happened. What he had to fear he did not exactly know. What he did know was that Petrov Petrovich—in that swift, blinding flash his face had leapt out of the dark—Petrov Petrovich had killed the red gendarme, and Gimpel had been there while it was done. And such a thing could not possibly remain without consequences of its own.

Once or twice he had attempted to creep back into the town to find out how matters stood, but after a little way his courage had failed him. But then it was absurd to speak of courage in connection with Gimpel, and Gimpel was quite aware of it. On the third morning, however, he saw, to his great joy, Mendel Elterkind, the timber-dealer, making his way straight for the forest with his spavined horse and rickety old cart. Eagerly Gimpel ran forth to meet him.

- "What news, Mendel?" he quavered.
- "News?" groaned Mendel. "Such news may my enemies hear every day of their lives. A ruin, a black ruin has come over the congregation. Every one of us that has only a hand and a foot has been arrested for killing that red dog of a gendarme."
- "Every one arrested!" echoed Gimpel, pale as death.
- "They started with all the guests at Leib Gutmann's party, because it was almost outside his house that the murder took place. Then they took the rest of the street, and finally they laid hands on the whole town. But yesterday again they let most of us go or else I shouldn't be here, should I? and only kept a dozen of the young men behind."
- "And and have they kept Shaya?" broke from Gimpel.
- "May Abraham, our father, intercede for him!" said Mendel mournfully. "Shaya is worse off than all the rest. There is a black mark against him."
 - "A black mark?"
- "Once, when he was away on a journey, his passport was a day overdue. Oh, woe, woe! A cholera has come on us!"
 - "And what's going to happen now, Mendel?"
 - "Anything may happen, of no Jewish house be

it said. A notice came from the police station that unless we deliver up the murderer out of our midst, all the prisoners will be court-martialed."

"Mendel, what is a court-martial?"

"What, don't you know, you fool? A courtmartial is a court-martial — what else do you think it is?"

"I see," said Gimpel with a nod. "And perhaps they will send Shaya to Siberia."

"If they don't send him farther. May God have pity on him! And now, don't keep me here chattering. A man has to make a living, even if everybody else has to die."

He left Gimpel staring after him, dazed and bewildered. But through that poor clogged brain of Gimpel's one thought flashed keen and bright. Shaya was out of the way. They would exile or even hang him. He could now go back to Tania.

But when he eventually saw her, it was difficult for him to believe that this was the Tania he had known. All the pretty roses had faded out of her cheeks. Her face had become white and hard and strained. And it was in a hard strained voice that she spoke to him.

"So you've come back," she said. "You did quite right - why shouldn't you run away and leave us to our fate? What are you to us, or we to vou?"

He gazed at her, tongue-tied and stiffening in every limb.

"Only, as you did not carry out your errand," she continued, "I must keep my word. I will not dance with you at my wedding."

"Tania!" he whispered.

"Because, Gimpel — oh, because I shall have no wedding!"

From Tania's words, and more so from the sudden gush of tears which at last thawed that hard frozen looks of hers, two things became apparent to Gimpel. First, how much she despised him for the poltroon he was. And secondly how her heart was breaking for her loss of Shaya. And straightway he resolved to find a way by which both things could be remedied.

Tania and her contempt for him — well, that might possibly be borne. But Tania with a broken heart, that could never be. Tania with no roses on her cheeks, with the laughter gone from her lips, was worse than no Tania at all. And therefore the real culprit must come forth, or else Shaya, Tania's Shaya, would be hanged or go to rot alive in the silver mines.

Of course, the most obvious thing to be done was to go and denounce Petrov Petrovich to the police. But of what use would that be? It was ridiculous to think that the word of an infidel Jew would be taken against that of an orthodox Russian. Besides, Petrov could enlist bureaucratic influence on his behalf. A cousin of his was a ticket-collector on the railroad. No, no, Petrov must be handled in a more diplomatic way.

Gimpel went to his money-box and took from it the eleven silver roubles he had saved. It was safer to keep one's fortune in silver coin, especially when there were such alarming rumors of national

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bankruptcy in the air. With the eleven roubles he went to Petrov Petrovich.

"Petrov, can you keep a secret?" he asked. It was a superfluous question, for Petrov had shown an undoubted capacity for keeping at least one secret, and might therefore be trusted with others. But it was just as well to ask.

Petrov looked at Gimpel cunningly through the spy-glass with which he was examining the interior of a watch that had just been brought to him for repairs. He thought it might help him to investigate Gimpel's interior.

"Keep a secret? That depends," he replied at last cautiously.

"Well, I want to ask whether you haven't a shotgun of some sort to sell to me."

Petrov gave a start and then closed up like an oyster.

"What do you need a shot-gun for?" he asked brusquely.

"Oh, you know, Petrov, in these days one never knows what may happen, and it's best to be prepared. You also know that we Jews may not buy any weapon from the gun-smith without a special permit from the police. So we must do it quietly. Come, I'll give you five roubles."

Petrov's avarice got the better of his prudence, ousting all misgivings as to the possible upshot of the transaction. Five roubles for something that wouldn't fetch fifty copecks as scrap-iron! And a few minutes later the gun and the roubles had changed hands. But Gimpel had not yet concluded his business.

"I have another six roubles here, Petrov," he said.

Petrov's fingers crooked greedily.

- "Is there anything else you would like to buy?" he asked.
- "Yes, an oath. You must swear an oath. You can have the other six roubles for it. But you must swear it on your crucifix."
 - "Swear what?"

"That if the question is put to you, you will answer that this gun was stolen from you a week ago."

An uncanny feeling came over Petrov. This was the craziest customer he had ever had. He bought the most out-of-the-way goods. Well, what of it—as long as he paid a good price for them? And out came the tarnished old crucifix, and Petrov swore on it and kissed it, apologizing to it profusely under his vodka-reeking breath for putting it to such use on account of a Christ-slayer, and promising it a new coat of gilt varnish as a peace-offering.

Joyously Gimpel hurried away with his purchase, having wrapped it up carefully to conceal it from the notice of passers-by. By a devious route he made his way back to the forest. There he set himself to dig a hole in the ground near a gnarled elm some distance away from its fellows, and in that hole he deposited his musket, and stamped the earth down tightly upon it. Then, more leisurely, for he still had to forge one or two links in the chain of his plan, he strolled back to the town, and came to a halt outside the police station. He drew one deep breath, and then he entered briskly.

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"What's your business?" the clerk-orderly accosted him roughly.

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- "To give important information concerning the murder of the gendarme, your Excellency."
- "Why haven't you come before? You know you will be punished for the delay."
- "I know I shall. You may as well make one job of it."
- "What do you mean? I should not advise you to trifle further with the law, my man."
- "I'm not trifling. I'm serious. I've come to give up the murderer."
 - "Well, where is he?"
- "Standing before you, your Excellency," replied Gimpel, drawing himself to his full height.

III

The next day Gimpel, heavily laden with irons, was brought into court before the Commissioner of Police and the Colonel of the district garrison. The latter began to read in a nasal, monotonous voice from a dossier, and the gist of what he read was that Gimpel Gimpelovich had confessed to the murder of the gendarme Stalubin.

The prisoner had told his story with an amount of circumstantial detail which left no doubt of his guilt. He had pointed out the spot where he had hidden the gun with which he had shot his victim, and had described the weapon minutely. He had accounted for his possession of it by admitting that

he had stolen it from Petrov Petrovich, the watchmaker, and Petrov had stated in his evidence that the musket had disappeared from its usual place a week ago. He had omitted to give notice of the theft to the police because the musket was so old that he did not think any mischief could possibly be done with it.

At this point Gimpel almost laughed aloud with pleasure. So Petrov had kept his word. And Gimpel grew yards in his own esteem to think that he had made such a deep impression on Petrov. Ha — perhaps he was becoming a man after all!

"There is only one point I wish to put to the prisoner," continued the Commissioner. "What motive had he for killing the gendarme?"

Gimpel's heart stood still. That was a question he had not provided against. To say that he had frequently had his ears boxed by the gendarme, sounded very inconclusive. It seemed as if all his laborious scheme would be wrecked by this one unexpected question. And then he had an inspiration. A question could often be answered by leaving it significantly unanswered. He leant forward carelessly, and shot a sly, semi-confidential wink at his interrogator.

"Why I shot the gendarme?" he said. "Really, your Excellency, does one ever need a reason for shooting a gendarme?"

The officer's lips twitched for an instant with something like a smile, and then he became stern again. He nodded slowly, comprehendingly, and then drawing to himself a document, he signed it with a flourish.

"Stand back," he commanded the prisoner.

Several guards pounced obsequiously on Gimpel to drag him out of the dock.

"Don't touch him," thundered the Commissioner. "Let him step back himself."

Wonderingly Gimpel obeyed.

"That man shot the gendarme no more than you or I did," said the Colonel in an undertone to the Police Commissioner.

"And yet you sigued — that," replied the other, pointing to the document.

"Que voulez-vous, mon cher? The rabble must have a victim. 'Blood for blood' is the dictum both of law and lawlessness." He paused and uttered a short laugh. "That's how these Jews always get the better of us. Their resourcefulness is unending. Whatever the crisis or occasion, they never fail to rise to the full height of it. Look, here they are in a sorry plight, and at once one of them comes forward and drags them out of it by the rope round his neck. But it's not going to be the rope for him."

"What, you don't mean to say you're going to pardon him?" was the astonished query.

"No. Unfortunately I can't show him mercy, but I'm going to show him all the honor I can. It isn't often one comes across a real hero. Remove the prisoner's chains," he continued aloud.

Gimpel heard the words, terrified. They had found him out after all. They were going to set him free. And it would be Siberia or the gallows for Shaya. And Tania would die as well. He took a quick stride forward.

"But it was I who killed the gendarme, I swear it," he cried.

"I haven't the faintest doubt of it," replied the Colonel dryly. "And therefore you will be shot at three this afternoon. Shot instead of hanged. The execution will be public."

And surely enough, at a quarter to three, Gimpel was on his way to the common, the common he had so dreaded, and to which he was now going on an errand still more dread.

But this time he did not feel afraid. Why should he? Was he not escorted by a detachment with bare sabers and loaded rifles to watch and take care of him, just as though he were a person of the utmost importance?

So he held his head up and kept a sharp lookout. Yes, certainly — just as he expected. At Leib Gutmann's window stood Tania, straight, erect, for Shaya's arm was round her waist.

"You were quite right, Tania — I shan't dance at your wedding after all," shouted Gimpel, waving both his unmanacled hands at her.

IV

A few weeks later the *Imperial Gazette* announced that the Colonel of the district garrison and the Police Commissioner had both been decorated for the promptness and cleverness with which they had nipped in the bud a formidable Nihilistic outbreak by apprehending and executing the ringleader, a notorious daredevil of an agitator.

Petrov Petrovich read the announcement, reprinted in the local newspaper, and chuckled at the absurd roundaboutness of things. And he wondered how many lashes of the knout he would earn for himself if he were to go to the Colonel and the Commissioner and say unto them as follows:

"Mr. Colonel and Mr. Police Commissioner, you are wonderful fellows. You are also excellent liars. That decoration looks exceedingly well on your manly chests. And to whom are you really indebted for it? To my wife — for being a coquette!"

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I

F the many magnificent palaces that line the granite embankment on the left side of the Neva. between the Liteinvi Bridge and the Bridge of Nicholas I at St. Petersburg, that of Baron Anselm de Kolberg, the Jewish banker, was perhaps the most magnificent. He had bought it from a prince, the bearer of one of the proudest names in Russian history, whom insensate extravagance had brought to ruin. There were some. chiefly among the baron's co-religionists, who said that his acquisition of the mansion was rather a piece of ill-advised ostentation; but that did not trouble Baron Kolberg very much. He was not the man to subordinate his private predilections to other people's opinions. Else he would not have been Baron Kolberg.

Through the window of his luxurious study, where he was awaiting the return of his son Felix, the baron looked thoughtfully out upon the streets. It was near midnight, but the mighty city was still bathed in a sea of light. There it stood, a gigantic lie, cloaking beneath its thin European veneer all its semi-Asiatic savagery. Under its mask of ultramodernity lurked the reactionary barbarism of the The free, unfettered life that surged Middle Ages.

through it might have stood as the emblem of all that was meant by liberty and progress. Instead, it was the anvil upon which were forged the chains of galling servitude that turned a whole nation into one immense slave-gang. Its brazen laughter, its fevered gayety, rose loud and discordant, and drowned the agonized cry of suffering millions. From the hour of its birth it had exacted a merciless toll of countless lives that were spent in redeeming the soil upon which it reared its pinnacles from the grip of the pestilential swamp; and ever since it had gone on glutting its greatness and splendor on human blood and sweat, and flourishing exceedingly on the fare, until in its pride and stony disdain it had become what it was now - a fit monument of the relentless might of the Muscovite Empire.

Baron Kolberg, as he watched the panorama before him, shook his head as though in answer to some secret misgiving. A soft tapping at the door broke in on his reflections.

"Well, Sebastian, what is it?" he asked, turning with a kindly air to the old man who entered.

"I only wanted to know if your Excellency required anything. Perhaps a glass of hot punch? It's a little chilly to-night."

"No, thank you, Sebastian; I'm quite comfortable. You had better go to bed."

"Your Excellency's pardon, but I have never yet gone to bed while any one was up in the house, and I won't make a beginning now."

"Very well. I don't suppose Master Felix will be long."

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He watched the old major-domo withdraw with an almost affectionate look. Sebastian was one of the heirlooms of the Kolberg family, and one of its most valued. Besides, the baron reflected, Sebastian was the only one living now who shared his greatest secret.

He turned back to the window, falling again to his former meditations, and again shaking his head at his silent thoughts. Presently the door opened noiselessly, and his son Felix entered.

"What are you denying so emphatically, father?" asked the young man, with a smile.

"The advance of civilization, the coming of the millennium — many things, in fact. I hardly know where to begin," replied the elder man pensively. And then his voice assumed a lighter tone. "But it's rather too late to-night to start moralizing. Tell me, did you have a good time?"

"Oh, excellent. I think it was the best performance of La Bohème they have ever had at the Opera here. And then I was a bit of a lion," continued Felix with a laugh. "Crowds of people congratulated me on my picture. Everybody thought it a great thing that a firm like Holzmann should have bought it the very first day of the exhibition."

"Oh, did they think so?" said the baron with an almost imperceptible smile. "Let me see. I presume you were in the Kowalevskis' box?"

- "I was," replied Felix a little curtly.
- "Who else was there?"
- "Only Madame Kowalevskaya and Vera."
- "Did you see them home?"
- "In my car. Theirs had gone to fetch M.

Kowalevski from a reception at the French Embassy."

There was a pregnant little pause.

"By the way, Felix," resumed the baron presently, "has anything been said as yet between you and Vera?"

"Not in so many words," was the somewhat hesitating reply; "but we understand one another. I like her, and I think she likes me. And other things being equal "—

"Quite so—other things being equal," interrupted the baron, seating himself ponderously in his chair. "But, you see, they are not. As you know, there can be no talk of marriage between you and Vera until the little difference in your respective religions has been adjusted."

"I am quite aware of that, father."

"But I don't know whether the Kowalevskis are. They are not the kind of people to spend their time poring over the statute-book. As a matter of fact, there's not so much necessity to do that for real orthodox Russians as there is for - ahem! - us Jews. But of course they would be bound to give the question their serious attention when it came to making definite arrangements between you two Their family lawyer would no young people. doubt not omit to tell them that Vera by marrying a Jew is laying herself open to - I don't exactly know what it is, capital punishment or exile. any rate, it's something very disagreeable. would hardly take kindly to the idea of their darling little Vera working in a platinum-mine, even in company with the man of her choice. In Siberia



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she would probably not find sufficient facilities for the champagne baths which I understand her doctor has ordered her."

"I thought you were aware that that was just the reason why I have not yet made any formal proposal," said the young man moodily.

"I am aware of it. And therefore we might seize the opportunity of thrashing the matter out between us. This seems a fitting psychological moment. Sit down, Felix."

It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast than was shown in the outward appearance of the two men. a contrast which did not seem altogether accounted for by the difference in their ages. Neither in feature nor in figure was there the least resemblance between this father and son. baron was short, almost undersized, portly in gait, and his face was cast in a correspondingly heavy Felix Kolberg, on the other hand, was tall and slender, with features delicately cut and a sensitive mouth that vibrated readily to every impulse of his artistic nature. Strangely enough, he showed as little resemblance to the late baroness, a half-length portrait of whom occupied the place of honor over the baron's writing-desk. It was a cold, stolid countenance, in which the Teutonic and Semitic types blended to the effacement of both. She had died some sixteen years back, and the baron had not replaced her.

During the pause that had ensued the baron had been dipping into a cigar-box, choosing among its contents with a deliberate care which seemed significant of the anxiety he felt to put his thoughts into

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appropriate words. The occasion demanded it. "The position, my dear boy, is this," he said at "We—that is, you and I—are occupying a distinctly anomalous place in our environments. We move in a certain class; but we are among them without being of them, and we are not allowed to forget it. Every now and then we are given a sharp reminder that we are admitted into St. Petersburg society only on sufferance. We are not even looked upon with the indulgent condescension which is the lot of parvenus. We might eventually live that down. No: the misfortune is that we are allowed to ascend to whatever height we please in the social scale, and yet the sharp line of demarkation follows us wherever we go. In fact, everybody admits that I play a great part in the world, that I am a financial and even a social force to be reckoned with; but even the people who press my hand most gratefully for the profitable investments I make for them, who are most effusive in their praise of my dinners, go away shaking their heads and whispering to one another, 'What a pity he's a Jew!"

"So much the worse for them," said Felix dryly.

"Admitted; but unfortunately also so much the worse for us. And what makes this state of things all the more regrettable is that it could be so easily remedied. It is merely a question of label, of outward conformity. Convictions do not enter into the case. I have only to be received into the bosom of the Greek Orthodox Church, and my racial origin is forgotten — or at any rate forgiven."

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"But you are a free agent, father," said Felix,

avoiding the older man's gaze.

"Not altogether. For one thing, I am bound by a matter of sentiment. I gave my mother on her death-bed a half-promise that I would not abjure the faith. I have kept it, and am willing to keep it so far as the considerations concern me. But there is yourself and your career."

The young man's brows lifted in astonishment.

"My career!" he echoed. "I should have thought that that was pretty well assured. At least, there is every indication of it. My picture in

the Imperial Gallery—"

- "Your picture in the Imperial Gallery!" said the baron, spacing his words. "Yes, that is a case in point. My dear boy, you force me to a humiliating confession. Your picture was not accepted on its merits solely. The chairman of the selection committee told me that it was undoubtedly the finest work of the year. But it was their duty to give native—that is, orthodox Russian—talent the preference."
- "Still, what does it matter? It got in," exclaimed Felix a little impatiently.
- "It did; but the gold that got it in was not entirely confined to the frame."
 - "Father!" exclaimed Felix, shocked.
- "You see what you have to expect," the baron continued, unperturbed. "At every turn we strike against obstacles, and you know even the hide on an elephant's shins will wear away if he runs up against things long enough. And now comes this difficulty about Vera, and I think it's time we made

a clean sweep of all difficulties for now and for the future."

- "What do you suggest, father?" asked Felix dully.
- "I haven't quite decided on my course of action. Having waited so long, it's only right I should not be too precipitate. I want to think the matter out in all its bearings. I am afraid my apostasy will make something of a sensation. It will be a great blow to my co-religionists, who have come to look on me as one of their staunchest champions—I don't know on what grounds, because I have never put myself out for them. So I want to see what I can do to minimize the effect. But I can't do it here."
 - "Can't do what here, father?"
- "I can't do any thinking in this noisy, tumultuous city. I must be quiet and undisturbed for a while. Where shall we go, Felix?"
- "Well, what about your summer house on the Krestovskiy Island?"
- "Where I should meet all my acquaintances of the Bourse and hear nothing but quotations and market-prices from morning till night!"
 - "A cruise in the yacht, perhaps."
 - "I should be seasick all the time."
- "I have it, father!" exclaimed Felix after a short pause. "Why not go to your estate near Tribunalska?"

The baron looked up, a startled look on his face.

- "Oh, no, no! that's quite out of the question," he returned hastily.
 - "But why, father?" insisted the young man.

"You have often made me wonder about it. Here is a splendid property, from which you derive a certain portion of your income, and yet you seem to make a point of ignoring its very existence."

"I have no time to bother about it. It's administered by an excellent steward in whom I have implicit confidence, and that's sufficient for me."

"But, if you will permit me to say so, father, it's not altogether fair to me. I think you ought to let me satisfy my curiosity about a possession which one day — I hope to heaven it will not be for many years! — may be mine. You don't know how often I have felt tempted to slip away quietly and go there by myself. I hear it has some of the finest scenery in the world. It might inspire me to some good work. And I should think you will find there all the solitude you want."

The baron had risen to his feet and paced the apartment once or twice. Then he turned and faced his son with an air of resolution.

"Very well, Felix; I think I may risk it."

"Risk it! Where's the risk?"

The baron looked a little confused, as though he had committed himself.

"I mean— You see, here again we are hampered by our disabilities. A ukase has lately been issued forbidding Jews to take up their residence in the country without special permission. I don't like to lay myself open to a rebuff. We might be refused."

"What, and the Minister for the Interior lunching with us to-morrow!"

"Well! well, I'll see what I can do with Gard-

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anoff. I'll open for him a bottle of the '54 Tokay. And now, my boy, to bed. I'm glad we've had this talk, although I'm not sure that it has brought us any further."

"Well, at any rate it has brought us as far as Tribunalska," said Felix, smiling at him affectionately.

"Yes, as far as Tribunalska," echoed the baron under his breath. And as he shook hands with Felix the latter could not help noting and wondering at the troubled look of retrospection that had come into the older man's eyes.

II

Some four days later the baron and Felix were installed on the Tribunalska estate. They had made the journey in the powerful road-car, which had brought the whole country-side out of doors in a panic of wonder at the rushing monster. It told the two travelers that they were going off the track of civilization into the heart of primitive life, and they were not sorry at the fact.

"Ah, here one can breathe!" said the baron, throwing out his chest, as he stood gazing through the windows of the country-house upon the vast stretch of upland before him.

"With one's lungs no less than with one's brain," added Felix with a smile of content.

The baron nodded. The days that had intervened since their departure from St. Petersburg had impressed on him more deeply the necessity of

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thinking out the task before him. It did not seem to grow easier by becoming more familiar. It was one thing to neglect the outward observances and rites appertaining to his ancestral faith, and another to abjure that faith altogether. There were the instinctive bonds forged round his heart by centuries of tradition. There was also the voice of conscience which made him shrink from the thought of becoming a perjurer to his dead mother.

And yet in the same degree that his scruples had increased, so had his temptations. The very morning after his conversation with Felix the Minister of Finance had called on him, and the recollection of that interview made the baron's heart beat high with the exultation of realized ambition. It was indeed a brilliant chance that lay fair within his reach. As yet he had said nothing of it to Felix. His sense of honor made him loath to influence the young man's decision by any considerations save those which had strict reference to Felix's own particular view of the question.

The country-seat stood in the center of the estate, surrounded to the radius of a mile by spreading corn and grazing lands, which were fringed off in the distance by the famous Orodwaya pine-forests. The massive pile turned its dazzling white frontage in a sort of majestic aloofness to the little township huddling abjectly in a hollow some two miles to the south. Kolberg owned that township. Three generations of his forefathers had ruled it from this big white house with a patriarchal sway. He was the first of his line who had left it for the wider domain in which his life had since been lived. He had gone

to St. Petersburg to find an outlet for the great capacities with which he knew himself to be endowed. In no very long time he had made himself an assured position in the very forefront of la haute finance. His share in the negotiating of a foreign loan had brought him his patent of nobility.

And vet he was fully aware that all this had been a mere side-issue, almost an accident. It was neither the desire for nor the hope of worldly advancement that had sent him from Tribunalska twenty-three years ago. It was the same reason, too, which had induced him never to return to it during all that time. He had no need to specify that reason to himself. It was summed up in one word, one name — Felix. One could never err by keeping on the side of caution. If he had prevailed on himself to come now, it was because he thought he had allowed a sufficient margin of safety. After all, twenty-three years was not a day. A period long enough to change the map of the world, to pull down old dynasties and set up new ones, was surely long enough to wipe out the danger he wished to guard against, a danger which no doubt had for a good long while existed only in his imagination.

To Felix himself there never had come the shadow of a notion that he was in any way connected with the baron's reluctance to return to his paternal home. His uppermost feeling, from the moment they had arrived, was an exhilarating sense of spaciousness and freedom. He seemed to have shed all that was artificial and exotic in his life. Things had been reduced to their natural value, to their proper perspective. The episodes which only a few

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days ago had loomed so large in his mind had lost their aspect of tragedy. The incident of the picture and its bearing on his career had become almost farcical. He was afraid that even his relations with Vera Kowalevska did not appear to him so serious as his father perhaps thought or wished. She was a very charming little thing — but only a little thing after all. It was paying her a great compliment to allow her to figure prominently in any large scheme of life. He reminded himself that he was still carrying in his pocket the letter he had written to her vesterday. He would take a stroll down to the town or village, or whatever that nondescript heap of hovels over there chose to call itself, and add a postscript that he had gone to post the missive himself instead of entrusting it to one There was no harm in feeding her of the servants. vanity with trifles.

He set off at a brisk pace, his step elastic on the velvety turf, his blood tingling with the crisp breezes that blew over the heights. It felt good to be alive. If he had his choice he would never go back to the mephitic magnificence of the capital. But of course that was impossible. His father's wishes had some claim to be studied. But he would come here again at the earliest opportunity.

He was half-way through his walk without having paid any particular attention to his surroundings. But the nearer he approached the township the more subject he became to the strange sensation that was stealing over him. He did not know what to make of it. Unconsciously he slackened his step as though to tread warily in his effort to give it

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shape and meaning. And at last it resolved itself into a curious feeling of homeliness, of vague familiarity. More and more it became impressed on him that he was not setting eyes on these places for the first time in his life.

It was absurd. He knew for a fact that he had never been here before. And yet almost at every turn there came to him subtle intimations as of remembered things. Out of the dim vista of the past there uprose shadowy intuitions that were apparently based on actual facts. His memory seemed to turn into a palimpsest from which the superimposed impressions were being gradually rubbed away, revealing the originals they had con-He grew impatient at this hide-and-seek game his fancy was playing with him. He would put himself to a practical test. He paused at a bend of the road. If his imaginings were true, there should be behind that intervening hillock the little Jewish cemetery of the place. As with a vague backwash of reminiscence there recurred to his mind certain white headstones it had contained. and again he experienced a thrill of the childish terror with which the sight of them had filled him at night in that mysterious past to which he was harking back. He held his breath as at some impending catastrophe, and then resolutely he turned the corner. An involuntary cry broke from him. Yes, here - gleaming in the sunlight, but with all their dismal associations stamped upon them rose the white gravestones of the little burialground.

There was no doubt of it, this was not his first

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visit to Tribunalska. Probably he had been here during his earliest childhood, in the first dawn of his intelligence. He felt more than a passing wonder why his father had never mentioned the fact. But beyond that he gave it no further thought for the time being. There were other things, sights and sounds, that claimed his attention.

As he set foot on the outskirts of the town it was plain to him at first glance that something unusual was going on in it. An air of gloom hung like a pall over the place. An ominous quiet hushed the narrow, crooked streets with an almost palpable presentiment of disaster. Through the low lattices of the wretched dwellings could be seen wan, griefstricken faces, and crouching figures flitting about the rooms with a sort of furtive and hunted haste. It seemed as though the indwellers were hiding from the menace of an invading enemy. And indeed quite a military aspect was given to the scene by the presence of a number of soldiers patrolling the streets with fixed bayonets. Another group was standing still, holding several bloodhounds in leash. Puzzled and vaguely uneasy, Felix passed several of the sentries, and then stepping up to a non-commissioned officer, he slipped a silver coin into his hand.

- "What has happened here?" he asked.
- "Nothing. It won't happen till later," was the gruff but not ill-humored reply.
 - "And what is that?"
- "Not much. Only a few Jews to be expelled from here."
 - "To be expelled! Why?"

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- "Because they've been living here without authority. There has been a revision of the list of those who have domiciliary rights; and all those that haven't must go."
 - "How many?"
 - "Just a few two or three hundred."
 - "And where are they going?"
- "Back to their kennels, the dogs!—to the Pale of Settlement. There's enough room for all of them there."

Felix bit his lip, but forbore from making any retort. No doubt the man would have been more polite in his expressions had he known that his interlocutor and his interlocutor's father belonged to the same breed as these so-called dogs, and that nevertheless the local prefect of police had deemed it worth while to call and pay them his respects. Felix was glad that the man did not know. That was why he was now getting at the truth.

"And what's all this parade about?" he resumed.

"A guard of honor," laughed the sergeant. "We have to keep a sharp lookout on them, else they'd give us the slip and skulk about in the forest; although I don't think they would be doing themselves much good by that," he added, swinging his arm with sinister significance in the direction of the straining bloodhounds.

"Is there no chance of their getting a respite?" asked Felix in as off-hand a tone as he could muster.

"Not the least. They have made their petition. They're always making petitions. The answer came back last night that they are not to be shown any leniency. If they resist, they will be driven at the point of the sword. A few of them "— he uttered another ugly laugh —" may have to be carried on ambulances, or possibly in their coffins."

Felix nodded silently and turned to go, sick at For the first time in his life he had come face to face with the great and grim tragedy into which the life of his people had shaped itself. saw them hounded like pariahs, uprooted from their homes, and driven into exile. He saw them the sport of gratuitous cruelty, which made a holiday of the pain and heart-break of its unoffending Even the wretched existence they had victims. eked out on this barren spot was grudged to them. And their destination was the Pale of Settlement. which was no more than the Russian equivalent for Leper Island, to swell in its circumscribed area the cry of misery that ascended to heaven, to join in the fratricidal, the almost cannibalistic, struggle for life that went on among its herded millions. Perhaps that was why his father had never allowed him to come here. Perhaps he had wished to spare him the knowledge that the splendors and luxuries of their St. Petersburg palace had such a set-off as the horrors he had witnessed to-day. He did not know whether he had reason to be grateful to his father for keeping him in a fool's paradise.

He was in no mood yet to go back to the big white house. He had to think these things over for himself before he faced his father again. He struck out along a disused path. Through an opening in the hedge he caught sight of the figure of an old man toiling painfully up the hill leading to his father's house. Felix stood still, vaguely fascinated by the

spectacle. That old man was to him symbolical of the never-ending pilgrimage of his people. He might be the legendary Ahasuerus, whose doom had become perpetuated in that world-wide passion-play on which the curtain never fell. And again, as he watched him, that stoop-shouldered graybeard became to Felix no mere allegorical type. Between the two of them there seemed to undulate some magnetic wave of sympathy, connecting them as by a close personal bond.

Felix turned away with a sense of fear. He was letting his imagination run riot with him. He must come back to everyday things and feel the earth solid under his feet once more. He tried to immerse himself in the wild beauty of the surrounding scenery. There was so much here to appeal to the artistic instead of the emotional side of his nature! He would look about and mark out a spot or two to which he would come to-morrow with his sketch-book.

And meanwhile he was forgetting that he still carried Vera Kowalevska's letter unposted in his pocket.

III

Baron Kolberg was awaiting his son's return with some impatience. To this were added several other moods which reduced his mind almost to a chaotic state. He had not long ago been left by a deputation of Tribunalska Jews, headed by the local Rabbi, who had implored him to use his

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influence at this eleventh hour to have the decree of expulsion revoked. He had sent them away with an evasive and non-committal answer. It was a great nuisance to have come here at this juncture of events. He would even have preferred being seasick on his yacht. In view of the news contained on the cipher telegram he had just received from his friend the Minister of Finance, it would be most awkward for him to identify himself with Jewish interests at this moment.

He took up the telegram and read it again. felt a distinct resentment that his hour of triumph should be embittered by this disagreeable contretemps. He almost began to see how it was that his co-religionists had succeeded in becoming so unpopular. Why would they insist on obtruding themselves at the wrong time and place? Why would they get themselves into trouble just when it was most difficult to help them? He regretted it had not occurred to him to point out to the deputation that it was in a way impious of them to make such a fuss about the whole thing. Were they not under the care of a special Providence, or in the belief that they were, and did they not somehow manage always to fall on their feet? And even if not. what was the fate of a handful of Jews compared with the epoch-making issue involved in this telegram?

He sat down again at the table and took up the copy of the reply he had dispatched to the Minister of Finance, scrutinizing carefully every word and every letter to assure himself he had made no mistake in the prearranged code. He turned irritably

at the sound of a knock at the door. Sebastian entered.

- "What is it now?" asked the baron curtly.
- "There's another of them," replied the old servant.
 - "Another of whom?"
 - "Of the Jews, your Excellency."
- "Send him away. Say I have no time for anybody."
- "I told him so already, your Excellency. And what does he do? He falls down on his knees, and grovels and clutches my coat, and cries that it's a matter of life and death."
- "Of course, everything is a matter of life and death with them," grunted the baron. "Very well, then; let him come in."

He remained at his desk with his back to the door, so that he did not immediately see the scarecrow of a man who presently limped into the room. A sorry sight he made, this old man, as he stood there, bent and haggard and ragged, with the gloom of despair peering out of his red-rimmed eyes. And yet in his very decrepitude and sordid state there was a certain majesty of bearing. He waited patiently for a minute or so, and then said in his wheezy voice: "Will you pay me a little attention, Baron Kolberg?"

At the sound of the voice the baron spun round as though at an electric shock, and springing up from his chair, stared at his visitor with wide-open eyes. His face had an almost ashen tint.

"I prostrated myself before your servant," continued the old man, striving painfully to keep him-

self erect, "because he is a Gentile, and we are the vassals of the nations. But to you I am speaking as equal to equal, as the sons of the same father, Abraham the patriarch, and it is fitting you should treat one of your race who is your elder in years with courtesy and respect. Our sages command it so."

"Nahum Nahumovitch, what is your business with me?" asked the baron, having seemingly recovered himself. "What do you want?"

"I, thank God, want nothing of you; but I come to you as the messenger of another — to wit, my wife."

"Well, then, what does she want?"

"Before I tell you, Baron Kolberg, I have to explain one or two things to you."

"But please be brief."

"Yes, yes, brief — very brief. God gave us five children, but it pleased Him — blessed be His name! — to afflict me even as He afflicted Job. He took them all away from me again — yes, all. The eldest got drowned in the great flood, another died in the war away in Manchuria, two were snatched from us by the cholera, and the fifth —"

"Hush!" broke in the baron, taking a step forward.

"The fifth, our Ephraim, we gave to you, freely and of our own accord. And my wife says we lost all the others as a punishment for selling our flesh and blood for the gold with which you tempted us. We sold him to you, though we knew full well that in your keeping he would transgress all the ordinances of our holy faith, that he would eat forbidden

food and desecrate the Sabbath. Our sin was great, and we do not murmur. But the human heart does not die, though all it cherished as its dearest may long be dead."

The baron was visibly growing restive.

"Nahum Nahumovitch, I asked you to be brief. Come to the point!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed, I am coming to it in a moment. It happens that we are among those proscribed. We have to leave here to-morrow, or possibly even yet to-day."

"To-day?" asked the baron quickly.

"And so, when my wife heard you had arrived here, she said — you know there is no accounting for the fancies of women — 'Nahum,' she said, 'there is the hand of God in his coming. He has brought our son with him — my heart tells me so. Now, if you go to him and entreat him kindly, perhaps he will let me look once more on the face of our son — our only living child — before we start off on our long journey into the unknown.' You see, your Excellency, I am not asking any favor for myself. My wife has sent me."

Baron Kolberg set his teeth tight. So he had been right after all! His intuition had told him correctly! He knew what might await him any time he came to Tribunalska. They were a hardy race these people, clinging to life, as the old man had said, all the more tenaciously the less they had to live for. He might have guessed that he would not be able to shake himself clear of Nahum Nahumovitch so easily. But fortunately a kindly bureaucracy had come forward in the nick of time

to help him. It was only a matter of a few hours. They were going — perhaps to-day. If he could tide over the danger till then, he would be safe for all time. The moment demanded drastic measures.

"I am sorry, my good friend," he said. "I should have no objection to granting your wife's request. But, alas! it's impossible. The boy whom I adopted from you is dead."

The old man tottered back a pace.

"Dead!" he echoed pensively. And then he broke into a mirthless laugh. "Ah, truly it is said that since death came into the world no man is safe with his life. I thought it was only the children of the poor who died. You must have mismanaged things a little bit, Baron Kolberg. You should have taken better care of — of your son."

"What could I do?" asked the baron with a shoulder-shrug. "He never had much stamina. He died when quite a boy."

"Oh, well, then, that's the end of it," said the old man, gulping back a dry sob. "But she will be very disappointed. She was so sure that she would see him again. Every day of her life has she ached to see him. Do you know what she once made us do? She made us go to St. Petersburg — half the way we tramped on foot — and we smuggled ourselves into the city by stealth, having no passport. By day we hid ourselves in foul places, and at night we prowled about the streets thinking that we might chance our way to your house, for we dared not ask. But the third night the gendarmes caught us, and put us in chains, and packed us back here in the same gang with a lot of thieves and murderers.

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But it appears it wouldn't have mattered, anyhow. Then he's really dead, our little Ephraim?"

"I said so," replied the baron gruffly.

"I'm sorry I troubled your Excellency. Dead is dead. May you yourself live yet many happy years! Good-day."

He was shuffling out, when, on a sudden thought, the baron called him to stop. The old man turned and followed the baron's movements with half-vacant eyes. Baron Kolberg had been fumbling in his pocket-book, and now came towards him with a handful of paper money.

"You have probably a wearisome journey before you. This may come in useful," he said rather more kindly.

Instantly, and without hesitation, the old man pushed aside the proffered gift.

- "What for, your Excellency? I have done nothing to earn it. You don't owe me anything. For what I gave you years ago you paid me amply. As it was, it was a wasted bargain. I have nothing of it, and you have nothing. We are quits. But I thank you all the same."
 - "As you please, Nahum Nahumovitch."
- "As God pleases, Baron Kolberg," the old man corrected him.

The withdrawal of his visitor did nothing to improve the baron's humor. Why had he been subjected to this unnecessary ordeal? His irritation was aggravated by the superstitious dread for the makeshift lie with which he had staved off the old man's importunity. He had said that Felix was dead. The words reëchoed in his heart with a

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sound of evil augury. He wished he had hit upon some less dismal, less clumsy prevarication. To get out of his dilemma he had consigned to the grave that splendid young life, his Felix, the being whom next to himself he loved best in all the world. What, suppose — his heart stopped beating at the thought — suppose God took him at his word?

He had by no means regained his equanimity when a little while later old Sebastian had occasion to enter the room on some casual errand. The sight of a suitable scapegoat made the baron's anger flare up afresh.

"It's evident that you're going into your dotage, Sebastian," he said severely. "How could you be so stupid as to admit that man, of all people in the world?"

"That man — what man, your Excellency?" faltered the old servant, taken aback.

"You mean to say you didn't recognize him?" continued his master, working himself up into quite a state of fury. "Didn't you see him often enough while we were — were negotiating with him? You mean to say you didn't know Nahum Nahumovitch?"

"Was that he?" asked Sebastian with a gasp.

"Of course it was he. However, it doesn't matter. I've been thinking for some time that I had better pension you off. I must have a younger and brisker man about me."

"But, your Excellency—" stammered poor Sebastian.

"That will do. Don't argue the point. I'm busy."

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Like a beaten dog the old fellow crept from the Tears of grief and vexation stood in his Never before had he been spoken to like that eves. by his master. He could not understand it at all. Half-dazed, he fumbled his way along the corridor, and at the farther end came face to face with Felix, who had just reëntered the house after his morning ramble.

"What on earth is the matter, Basti?" he exclaimed in astonishment, gripping him affectionately by the shoulder, for he loved the faithful old servitor.

"To say that to me! To treat me like that!" cried Sebastian, now sobbing outright.

"Who did? Tell me," Felix urged him.

"Who? Why, his Excellency. Is there any one else from whom I should take it so to heart?" exclaimed Sebastian a little wildly. "To expect me to recognize him after all these years!"

"Recognize whom? Calm yourself, Basti," said Felix, getting more puzzled. But in the face of his sympathy the old man lost more and more control of himself.

"When I saw him last he was a tall, well-set-up man, with a fine black beard, and now he looked a wizened, shriveled-up ape. Who would imagine they were one and the same man? Would I have let him in if I had known it was Nahumovitch?"

"Yes, yes, quite so," said Felix, retaining his patience with difficulty. "I understand now. Somebody came here, and you admitted him without recognizing him. Well, who was it?"

"The man from whom his Excellency adopted

you," cried Sebastian, his excitement overpowering his discretion. "How was I to know—"

Felix had recoiled as from the point of a dagger. Then he stood rigid.

"One moment, Sebastian," he broke in, tense and quiet. "You said a man came here from whom his Excellency had adopted me. The man, then, you speak of was my father — my real father?"

A frightened cry broke from Sebastian. Frantically he seized Felix by the hands.

"What have I done — what have I said?" he moaned. "Oh, for Heaven's sake don't let his Excellency know I told you! Only the three of us knew — he and I and the baroness. Oh, what will become of me now?"

"You have nothing to fear, Basti. I will take everything on myself," said Felix, still in the same tense voice as before.

Beyond the initial shock, the tremendous news had left him calm and unaffected. A few days ago the revelation would have come to him with the force of a thunderbolt, or more likely he would have laughed the old man's words to scorn. would have thought that his wits were wandering. But the knowledge he had gained that morning had prepared his mind for an instant acceptance of the truth. Many things had become clear to So that was why the baron had avoided Tribunalska so sedulously! And that was where the risk came in of which he had spoken! He was afraid that Felix might remember, might delve into the past, might ask questions, that his father might appear on the scene; he had been afraid exactly of all that had come to pass. Felix laughed. Even a great and powerful man like Baron Kolberg was not strong enough to turn the stream of ordained events out of its course. Money, even millions of it, could not fight Fate.

He pulled himself together, and sent the disconsolate Sebastian away with a few more reassuring words. And what now? The knowledge that had come to him was clearly not meant to run to waste. It was intended for the pivot on which his future There was no choice, no alternative. was to turn. There was but one thing to do, and that it was the right thing he felt from the joyous warmth that had begun to thrill through his heart. A gradual exultation came over him, as that of a beggar who is slowly realizing that he has come into unsuspected riches. His whole being went out to this unknown father of his as it had surely never gone out to the A new instinct had sprung up in him which was altogether different from the link that had bound him to his foster-father. His soul was hearkening eagerly to that most powerful call of all — the call of the blood.

Yes, he would follow that call wherever it might lead him. His father! Perhaps there was a mother too; perhaps brothers, sisters! He had no idea. He might possibly find out by asking the baron; but that would be stupid, since he would so soon acquire certainty for himself. And altogether it would be better not to go near Baron Kolberg till he could face him with a definite plan of action. A vague resentment stirred him as though at a trick that had been played on him. Kindness,

loving care, all the indulgences that wealth could offer, the baron had given him — everything save honesty. But for this mere chance he might have gone about to the end of his days a mystery to himself, trying to reconcile discordant factors, to dovetail puzzling incongruities. Had it depended on the baron, he would have remained that most ignoble and ludicrous thing — an unconscious sham, a self-mistaken identity. He felt that he was not only going forth to find his real father; he was setting off in quest of his own true self.

IV

Felix was half-way back to the town before he remembered that in his haste he had forgotten to ask Sebastian for some indication of his father's But he was reluctant to turn back, for address. fear some untoward incident might interfere with his errand. At any rate, he had caught the name by which his father was known, and he also knew that an all-vigilant Government kept each one of the Czar's countless subjects carefully pigeon-holed and docketed, so that he might give them his individual attention whenever occasion required. It was a system which might be productive of untold good if it were not meant instead to serve the most evil of purposes. Well, for once it should be made to redeem itself by being turned into a blessing.

He found his way to the local police station, and was presently shown into the sanctum of the sub-

prefect, having sent in the necessary credentials.

"You are the son of Baron Kolberg?" said the official, coming towards him with an obsequious smile. "I am delighted to see you. Pray be seated. What can I do for you?"

"Oh, it's quite a trifling matter. About an hour or so ago an old Jew of the name of Nahumovitch called on Baron Kolberg."

"What! has he been annoying his Excellency?"

"No, no," said Felix hastily, alarmed at this construction put on the object of his visit. "I merely have a message for him. But I don't know his address."

"Oh, that's quite a simple matter. I'll see to it for you," said the sub-prefect.

He rang a bell, and a gendarme entered. The sub-prefect gave him some hurried instructions, and the man saluted and left.

"If you will kindly wait a few minutes? Perhaps you will do me the honor of smoking a cigarette with me meanwhile," said the officer, turning affably to Felix.

Felix readily assented. The consideration with which he had met seemed to constitute an additional count of indictment against his foster-father. On his own admission, the baron had not used his vast influence in the service of his co-religionists to anything like the extent he might have done. But Felix did not harp on the thought. His mind was bent on a greater issue. With forced attention he listened to the sub-prefect's amiable small-talk—the officer was careful not to touch on any controversial topics—while the minutes crept on, and

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his heart beat like a muffled drum in trepident expectancy. At last, after the lapse of a quarter of an hour, the gendarme returned and made his report to his superior.

"That's right," nodded the sub-prefect. "Now, M. de Kolberg, if you will be good enough to go with my man he will see you to your destination."

Felix, genuinely grateful, rose to follow his guide. After a walk of only a few minutes, they stopped at the entrance of what appeared to have been a little grocer's shop. The empty window gave it a wretchedly derelict look, and, in view of the cruel ordinance hanging over the town, told its own tale. The owners were on the proscribed They had already passed several such empty Felix could easily gather what had hapwindows. pened. The stock had been sold for anything it The same, no doubt, had been the would fetch. case with the fixtures and furniture. Any offer was good enough, for anything was better than nothing. From a remark of his guide he learned that the police authorities did not look kindly on the The less there was sold the more would be left behind. And it was naturally the duty of the police to take care, after their fashion, of all property that had been left ownerless.

Felix dismissed the gendarme, having made him ample recognition for his services. He breathed more freely to know himself rid of the man's inquisitive stare. As he stepped across the threshold of the shop a great wave of pity threatened to sweep him onward with a rush. He held on to the doorpost as though to check himself. He felt he had

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to husband his strength, to economize his emotions. He did not know to what strain they would be put.

The first glance told him. The floor of the interior was littered with nondescript wreckage, among which two large, clumsy packages stood out. Over one of them stooped an old man, panting audibly as he pulled at one of the cords to make the fastenings more secure. Almost without surprise Felix recognized in him the man he had seen climbing the hill to the baron's mansion earlier in the day. The old man faced round sharply at the sound of approaching footsteps. And over there, in the half-gloom of one of the corners. huddled an old woman frantically clasping and unclasping her hands. Felix's heart almost stood still. Great Heaven, perhaps — nay, assuredly this woman was the mother who had given him life! Both the old people stumbled to their feet as the tall figure of the stranger appeared in the doorway.

"What, already?" asked the old man in a tone of sullen fear.

"I wish to know if you are the person who came to see Baron Kolberg this morning," said Felix, stepping closer to him.

"I am." And half-turning to the old woman he whimpered: "Woe, woe, what new misfortune does this mean?"

"What was your business with him?" continued Felix.

"A private business," said the old man with rather more spirit.

"I want to know. Answer my question."

"Answer him, Nahum; in Heaven's name, answer him!" said the old woman in an imploring whisper.

"I went to ask him about a child of mine whom he took from us years ago to be his son. I begged him to let me see him before we went."

"And his reply?"

"That there was no son. The child had died." Felix heard it unmoved. It had become evident to him that the baron had adopted a certain policy with regard to his origin, and that he was carrying it through unswervingly. It was only to be expected of Baron Kolberg. Even his worst enemies did not deny him the virtue of consistency.

The old woman, misinterpreting his silence, wailed aloud: "Oh, don't punish him for it! He meant no wrong. It was I that sent him. The fault was mine."

"Is this your wife?" quavered Felix, turning to the old man.

"Yes, young sir. And never was man blessed with a better."

"Listen," said Felix, coming to a swift resolution. "Baron Kolberg has sent me to you with a message. He wants to make amends to you for having told you a falsehood. It is not true that your son is dead. He lives, and you are to see him."

"O God in heaven!" cried the old man, "what new devilry is this? — Chaya, do you hear? There is some trick behind this message. Oh, why don't they let us go forth to die in peace by the road-mide?"

But the old woman had been creeping forward stealthily inch by inch. At his last words she had gripped her husband by the arm and whispered in short, deep gasps: "Nahum, Nahum, you fool and sinner, blaspheme not! You are wrong. This is no trick. God has put a new light into my half-blind eyes. I see all He wants me to see." And in a moment she had thrown herself on Felix and strained him to her with all the strength of her feeble arms. "This is the head that lay on my breast when he was a babe; these were the arms that twined round my neck; these were the lips that babbled to me 'Mother!' Nahum, as God lives, this is our son Ephraim!"

"Yes, little old mother, I am your son," said Felix, his tongue shaping naturally to the quaint jargon in which she had spoken and in which he had made his first essays of childish speech. "I am your son, a hundred times your son. I have stepped back to you across the wide gulf of the years. I am your own again, your very own. Take me, mother — father!"

A quivering silence seemed to hold the room. But before either of the old people could reply a sudden noise made their hearts leap into their mouths. From the streets came the long roll of a drum, which was followed by a deepened hush. And then there rang out the harsh, guttural voice of a man uttering words in tone of command.

"What does he say, Ephraim? You know their language better than we," said Nahum tremulously.

A thrill of joy shot through Felix. How quickly they had learned to lean on him!

"Nothing to be alarmed at," he informed them, throwing an arm reassuringly around each. "It is only what you have been expecting, except that it has come a little sooner. He says that in an hour's time you are all to assemble in the market-place. The transport will start from there. And that doesn't give me much time to get my business done. Wait here till I return."

"Chaya, Chaya, I told you it was a trick! He is going!" shouted Nahum despairingly.

Chaya, however, uttered a joyful laugh. "Oh you blind of faith!" she reproved him. "If God has worked one miracle for us, can He not work another? He has sent him to us once. He will bid him come to us again."

"Those whom God has sent once need no bidding to return," said Felix solemnly; and then, with a short but loving backward glance, he made his way out into the open.

Aye, he did not have too much time to get his business done. It was a great, an heroic business, but he felt quite strong enough for it. Nay, his strength seemed to grow giant-like the nearer his hurried steps made him approach the big white house in which his sojourn was to be so brief. The steep incline that brought him into its purview became a symbolic height to which he was rising as on eagle's wings. A few minutes later he stood again in the huge porch and made his way straight to the baron's room.

"My dear Felix, where on earth have you been

all this time? And you've had no lunch!" exclaimed the baron, walking towards him with a solicitous air.

"Don't trouble. I won't starve," replied Felix a little curtly.

"I nearly sent out a search-party for you," continued the baron, not noticing his strained manner. "Not because I was afraid you were lost," he added with a smile, "but because I was anxious to let you have my wonderful news. Shortly after you left I received a telegram from Dagoutsky. To tell you the truth, my dear Felix, I've not been quite candid with you."

A quick flush came into the young man's cheeks at the unconscious irony of the words.

"It's quite true that I left St. Petersburg for the purpose of — well, of spiritual introspection. But there was also a more material reason for it. Certain negotiations were going on, and Dagoutsky advised me to disappear for a little while from the arena, so as to leave him more freedom for action. His wire says he has succeeded. Do you know in what?"

"I regret I have no idea."

"Felix, I have been appointed director of the Imperial Bank! Can you imagine what that means?" he went on, his chest broadening visibly under the swell of his triumph. "It means that I become practically the financial dictator of Russia. All its international interests, all its widely radiating threads of foreign policy, center in my hands. I am the greatest power of all—the power behind the throne. I don't suppose it will be a bed of

roses — a nation's money-bags are not comfortable to sleep on; but I shall take care not to be troubled by nightmares. Of course, Dagoutsky says it's a sine quâ non that I must forthwith join the Greek Orthodox Church. So he takes the choice out of my hands. In fact, I have committed myself to his condition in my reply."

"Quite so," said Felix, still holding back, but feeling ready and primed for the attack.

"There's no object now in our staying here longer. I shall order a special train for to-morrow morning."

"I shall not accompany you."

"No?" The baron was plainly disappointed. "Well, if you like you can follow me in a few days."

"I shall not follow you, Baron Kolberg."

"Baron Kolberg!" There was no mistaking the baron's utter bewilderment at the unusual form of address. "What's the matter, Felix? You seem very strange."

"Several strange things have happened to me since I saw you last. Why did you not take me into your confidence?"

"About Dagoutsky?"

"Not about Dagoutsky. I don't care two straws about the financial dictatorship of Russia. Why have you never told me the truth about my parentage?"

The baron winced as at a physical blow.

Felix did not give him time to recover himself. "Surely that was a matter about which I had a right to be told. It's some time since I arrived at

years of discretion, and I might have been trusted to take my own view of it. You evidently thought that your opinion was good enough to serve for the two of us."

"Felix!" exclaimed the baron in a tone of alarm.

"That was assuming rather too much, even though you had acquired a certain right to act as the arbiter of my destiny," went on Felix relentlessly.

"Felix, Felix, I meant it for the best!" cried the

"No doubt, from your own egotistic point of view. You had taken me over body and soul, which, I presume, included everything that was mine before I came to you."

"I admit it was selfish of me," said the baron, his arm uplifted as though in dread of a further "But I am not sorry that — through whatever accident it might be - my selfishness has come to light. It will prove to you more than anything else the immeasurable love I bear you, Felix. I wanted you to be all mine, to leave no question in your mind but that you were my own flesh and blood. I was jealous of all who might rob me of a single heart-throb of yours. And what is more, I have made sacrifices for it. I have lived a lonely life. I might have married again. I might have had children of my own. But I would not. were all-sufficient for me. From the moment you came to me you fulfilled for me all my cravings of fatherhood. The same single-heartedness I felt for you as my child I wanted you to feel for me as vour father. In my desire for that it did not occur to 228

me that my egotism might lend itself to another construction." He sat down, the spent and broken shadow of his proud self.

Felix stood looking at him, his heart full of pity and remorse. Then he came and stood close to him. "Forgive me," he said quietly, humbly. "I don't know which I have been — cruel or foolish. I too thought of only one aspect of the case. Dearest and best of friends — I need not give you any higher title — forget what I said in my thoughtlessness. There is a loftier plane on which we may stand to argue this thing out than that of sordid recrimination. There is a greater, a diviner motive that brings us to the parting of the ways."

"The parting of the ways?" For a moment the baron looked puzzled, and then an agony of fear came into his eyes. "Felix, Felix, you are not thinking of leaving me?" he cried.

"I am — I must. I must as surely as if I saw the finger of God outstretched visibly to point me the path I am to take. Let me speak. This "— he picked up the telegram from the baron's writing-table —" is calling you one way. Two quavering voices, hoarse with crying out against the doom that awaits them, are calling me the opposite way. I have seen my father and mother."

"Felix, it need not be," broke in the baron quickly.

"I don't see how it can be avoided," proceeded Felix steadily. "You dare not take me with you unless you are prepared to foil your ambition. I cannot follow you across the border-line that separates you once and for all time from our—from my people. You dare not harbor under your roof a son, an alleged son, who openly flaunts his heresy while you go about wearing the mask of a true believer. Your enemies, and from your own admission you anticipate many, will lay you by the heels in a moment. And that is the case as far as it concerns you."

Baron Kolberg made no reply. He sat, his head drooping low on his chest.

"And now for myself," continued Felix, his voice taking a firmer tone. "There the matter is quite simple. It means merely coming down to the elementary emotions. I should be no better than any hog feeding at the trough were I to let my poor old mother and father trudge their tottering way along the road of exile without my arm to hold them up, to shield them. To praise me for going with them would be nothing but the grossest affront."

Still his listener sat silent.

"But that is not all. It is a great thing for a man to find his kith and kin, but"—his voice rose in a sort of ecstasy—"it is sublime for a man to find his nation. I found mine to-day. A people that is abject, prostrate, trodden in the dust, but therefore all the more glorious to me. A race of martyrs, a race of conquerors! I should never have believed it had I not seen it with my own eyes. Oh, I tell you—though probably you know—there are martyrdoms going on to-day to which the savageries of Torquemada are but an exhibition of brotherly love. But they conquered the Inquisition, and they will conquer again. I too want to bear a small share in their victory."

"What are your plans, Felix?" asked the baron, looking up with heavy eyes.

"I don't know yet. In the first place, I suppose, to see my parents safely out of this inferno."

"Where to?"

"Abroad, to the lands of liberty — England, America."

"But you have no means. You don't even know the language."

"No; but the palette, I think, talks Esperanto. And besides, I have to-day received Holzmann's check for a thousand roubles for my picture. I forgot to mention it to you this morning. It was sent on to me from St. Petersburg."

The baron nodded. He had not had the courage to offer Felix money, and it would not be safe to tell him now at whose commission the dealer had bought the picture. Felix was staring pensively at the ground.

"I thought at first of using it to buy Vera an engagement-ring," he said slowly. "But of course there's no occasion for that now. By the way, I'm afraid I must trouble you to apologize to her for — for my eccentric conduct. You may give her any explanation you like. And now "— there was a catch in his voice—"I must go."

A despairing groan came from the older man. "Felix, Felix, is this the end?"

"No; the beginning. The end rests solely with Providence."

"Shall I hear from you?"

"Possibly. If not, you will hear of me. You see, I am going forth into the world with the best

of all equipments—confidence in myself. There is just one thing more. Don't be hard on old Sebastian for telling me your secret. You know he was nothing more than God's tool in this."

The baron shrugged his shoulders wearily. "I know," he said, bowing his head. "This was ordained, or else He would not have let your brothers and sisters die. He would not have lent you to me to save you from sharing their fate. I too was merely His tool."

A flash of joy overspread the young man's face. "Ah! at last you are striking the right note," he cried. "Do you think it was, after all, so easy for me to part from you? But now my heart will be lighter for the comfort which I know you have put into yours."

He turned to go, and then, on second thoughts, he stopped and faced the baron once more.

"Perhaps you think me ungrateful," he continued humbly. "I have said nothing to you about all that I owe you. I have not said it because I feel it too deep down in my heart for utterance. But I think I can pay you no greater tribute than to say that it was your training that made me take up my duty the moment I saw it. Perhaps"—he gazed earnestly into the grief-stricken face before him—"perhaps one of these days God will let me also taste the joy of suffering for having imparted to others all that is best and noblest in me. Good-by."

V

Down in the market-place of the township the transport-gang was mustering for the trudge to the nearest railway station, seven miles off. From there those who had the means might continue their journey by train at first-class fares — in cattle-trucks. All around them the naked swords of their escort flashed in the sunlight. Wild-whooping Cossacks encircled them on nimble horses, savagely whirling their pennoned spears. The mortal fear in the hearts of the outcasts was painted on their ghost-like faces. In all that wretched band there seemed to be only one living man.

To his exceedingly great surprise, the sub-prefect, who was superintending their departure, had seen Baron Kolberg's son take his place among the exiles. He was about to address a jesting inquiry to him, but something in the other's mien and manner cowed him, as it were, into silence. With a shoulder-shrug he turned away. They were a strange people these Jews, their millionaires no less than their beggars. It was useless to try to fathom them. He only felt vaguely that there was a time when even a Russian sub-prefect of police must refrain from asking questions.

"Ready, all!" rang out the command.

And the transport moved, shuffled, stumbled forward, urged to a panic haste that was beyond their strength by the threatening shouts of their guards. And towering high above the bent-shouldered throng stood Ephraim Nahumovitch — Felix Kol-

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berg that was — gripping the hands of his parents on either side of him, his gaze fixed fearlessly upon the distance beyond, his hopes outstripping the tortoise march of the present and speeding towards the joyous future that from far-off seemed welcoming him with outstretched hands.

And long after he had gone, for a span that could not be reckoned by the ordinary measure of time, Baron Kolberg remained seated at his writing-desk, staring with vacant eyes at Dagoutsky's telegram.

Mes -

A MESALLIANCE MADE IN HEAVEN

It is sad for a man to find out rather late in life that he has been following with more or less success—chiefly less—one vocation when he might have shone like the morning star in another. Such was Mendel Kugelman's tragic experience as he realized that he had wasted his talents on being a matrimonial agent when he was really cut out for a detective.

How, on the slight clew which chance had thrown in his way, he had built up a complete case and had gathered information which no doubt would be of the utmost interest to the great Mordecai Spiegelberg, stamped him as worthy to figure in the pages of Gaboriau or Doyle — classics of whom, by the way, Mendel had never heard. As his bandy little legs trundled him rollingly and rapidly to his destination he debated with himself how much he ought to ask for the information in question.

"You're a great nuisance, Mendel," said Mr. Mordecai Spiegelberg when Mendel had been grudgingly admitted by a supercilious housemaid to the handsome apartment occupied by Mr. Spiegelberg up in the Bronx. "You're a great nuisance, but come in all the same."

Mendel accepted the invitation with hopeful alacrity. He had evidently been fortunate enough to find Mr. Spiegelberg in great good humor. The greater the good humor there was to spoil, the bigger should be Mendel's reward. On the table before Mr. Spiegelberg were a number of small books, account books of some sort, as Mendel judged them to be.

"Sure I'm not disturbing you?" he asked,

promptly seating himself.

"Not for the moment. I've got a meeting here later on, but just at present I'm catching my breath—the first time I've caught my breath in thirty years."

"That's a long time," said Mendel, mystified. Mordecai laughed a full, fat, satisfied laugh.

"Too long to make a hundred thousand dollars? Yes, my boy, that's what the books show for my balance at the bank. A hundred thousand dollars—and eighty cents."

"And eighty cents!" echoed Mendel. He was overwhelmed by the colossal range of an intelligence which had accumulated such a vast fortune and yet did not consider eighty cents too small for its notice.

"Yes, Mendel, when I ran about barefoot in Berditchef I never thought I would make all that out of shoes. However, though I'm taking a few minutes' rest myself, I don't want to waste your time. What is it—another match for my son? Well, let me save you all further trouble here and now. Last week I had a talk with Moey Feinstein, and we as good as fixed it up between his Debby and my Louie. Ten thousand for a dowry, and furniture, and the wedding. Moey is agreeable to everything. D'you know Debby Feinstein? What a girl! Plays

French and speaks the piano. So leave off running my house in and save your soles, although it's good for trade."

Mendel sat silent for a few moments, pondering how he might most effectively launch his thunderbolt.

"Mr. Spiegelberg, I guessed there was something in the wind with Debby Feinstein. But I ain't come here to make a match. I've come to unmake one."

"What, do you know anything against Debby?" Mordecai asked quickly.

"God forbid. May I have such a daughter and such a dowry to give her. But I know something against your Louie."

"Ha! Against Louie?"

"Your Louie's already got a girl."

"What, only one?" asked Mordecai with a laugh of relief. "I thought he had half a dozen. Well, all the better for Debby. He'll be getting to know the ways of women, and they want some knowing."

"Yes," said Mendel slowly, "but wouldn't it be rather expensive if he was to give each of half a dozen girls a two-hundred-dollar diamond ring—what they call a Solly Tare?"

By this time Mendel had succeeded in making Mordecai sit up. The latter's bushy eyebrows were knit in a thunderous frown. It might be a mere coincidence, but two hundred dollars was just the amount which Louie had, or ought to have, to his credit at the savings bank.

"Tell me all about it," said Mr. Spiegelberg gloomily.

"Not so fast, please. First, what about terms?"
"Terms? Oh, I see. Never mind now. If
there is anything in your story I promise you you
shall be satisfied."

Mendel looked at those bank-books and decided to take Mordecai Spiegelberg on trust. And then he plunged into his account, informing it with a wealth of circumstantial evidence, each item of which was another nail in the coffin of Louie Spiegelberg's clandestine young love-dream. But, stripped of its trimmings, it just amounted to this: that he had seen Louie kissing a girl good-night on the doorstep of a house two or three blocks away from Mendel's own home; that he had watched for Louie on several successive nights, and had seen the same performance repeated, only each time with perhaps more ardor. And then the clinching effect of his having followed the two young people the previous evening, having seen them enter a jeweler's place, and then having wormed out of the jeweler, an acquaintance of his, the nature and price of Louie Spiegelberg's purchase.

Mordecai listened, leaning back in his arm-chair and puffing heavy clouds from his cigar to the ceiling. When Mendel had finished he said quietly:

"I'm sure what you say is quite true. But, all the same, I'm not going to take your word for it."

"Of course not," said Mendel, not in the least offended. "You're going to ask Louie himself?"

"That's exactly what I'm not going to do. He'll play his own game, the young rascal, and put a varnish on it to make black look white. He knows that when he's twenty-one — that's in three months'

time — I'm going to make him a partner, and once the deed of partnership is signed he can snap his fingers at me and Debby Feinstein. No, no; I'll talk to him when it's time. I'll just handle this my own way. Who's the girl? Pretty, I suppose."

"I can't say. My Rachel has forbidden me to express an opinion about the looks of any other woman."

Mordecai disrespectfully waved Mendel's wife aside.

- "But I suppose you're at liberty to tell me her father's name?"
 - "Oh, certainly. Lipman Lazarus."
 - "And his trade?"

Mendel hesitated, and then a sly smile puckered his mouth.

- "He's also in the shoe line."
- "Lazarus, in the shoe line? Where's his place?"
 - "Oh, on Delancey Street."
- "Lazarus shoe line Delancey Street," repeated Mordecai with wrinkled brows. "How is it my travelers have never brought me any orders from him? I must look into that to-morrow. I'm going to see this Lipman Lazarus."
 - "Going to see him?" echoed Mendel with a gasp.
- "Yes. Why not? Think I'm frightened of him? I'll just find out from the gentleman what he means by letting his daughter philander about with a young man without coming to that young man's father to ask if it's all right. What's his number on Delancey Street?"
 - "He's he's got no number," quavered Mendel,

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now apparently scared out of his wits. "He's —"

"No number — how can a store have no number? Are you crazy?"

"Mr. Spiegelberg — I meant to say —"

But what Mendel meant to say he was compelled for the time being to keep locked up in his bosom, for at that moment the door opened and a little crowd of serious-looking men trooped in.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Mordecai, shaking hands with one or two. "Let me see — who are you? Oh, yes," he went on, having consulted a little note-book. "The Amalgamated Downtown Children's Institute and Ephraim-Manasseh Talmud Study School. Sit down, we'll go right ahead with the business."

"Only one second, Mr. Spiegelberg," whispered Mendel, making another frantic attempt to obtain a hearing.

But Mr. Spiegelberg unceremoniously took him by the shoulder and bundled him out by the door.

"Don't interfere with my public duties. I'll meet you to-morrow morning, ten o'clock, on Delancey Street, just by the bridge, and then we'll go and see Mr. Lipman Lazarus together."

Mr. Mordecai Spiegelberg, as became his wealth, was a multi-president, being head of nine institutions and on the board of directors of eleven others. No wonder he got occasionally mixed up and did not always know which meeting was which and when. And to-night, of course, he was a little more confused than usually. All through the meeting the unwelcome news Mendel Kugelman had brought him kept surging through his head. And yet—

And yet he had a vague idea that, like other unpleasant incidents in his career, he might eventually turn even the present one to his advantage. haps Louie had not chosen so badly for himself after all. True, Debby Feinstein, with her ten thousand, was desirable, but she was not the only pebble on This Lipman Lazarus, a man who had the beach. a place on Delancey Street and could afford to live "private"—possibly he was a wholesale manufacturer himself, who had just come in from one of the big cities. And through Mordecai Spiegelberg's brain there flashed a vision of a combine, a huge trust that should corner the market and freeze out all competition. He was getting more and more anxious to see this Lipman Lazarus.

True to the appointment, Mendel Kugelman was waiting for him on Delancey Street. Mendel's lips were set tight. In his heart rankled the ignominious memory of having been kicked out of the room in sight of a dozen people. And only because he wanted to correct Mordecai's obvious misapprehensions of the little jest in which Mendel had indulged. Well, he told himself, sulkily, now Mordecai Spiegelberg could correct it himself.

They walked in silence down the street, Spiegelberg's eyes eagerly scanning the shopfronts for the expected name. At last they came to a hoarding, behind which some building operations were going on, and Mendel Kugelman stopped with a malicious grin.

"This is Lipman Lazarus' place," he said curtly.
"Which — where?" exclaimed Mordecai, gazing blankly before him.

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"There — don't you see the shoe-line?" asked Mendel, pointing to the long row of bootblacks who were clamorously importuning the passersby. "That's Lipman Lazarus, the third from the end."

Mordecai Spiegelberg had weathered many an emergency in his strenuous career and had never lost his head. He did not lose it now, nor even his temper. Ignoring the grinning Mendel, he walked straight over to Lipman Lazarus and placed his foot on the shoe-box.

Before him, looking up with a sad yet friendly smile, he saw the face of a patriarch. It was a face, rugged with suffering, and yet noble in outline, with a quiet dignity about it which, it seemed, the most menial drudgery would not be able to mar. Yes, it was the face of a man who might be the father of a proud and handsome daughter. Busily and deftly the gnarled old hands went at their task.

"Trade good?" asked Mordecai.

"God is good," was the piously evasive reply.

"Hm. Making plenty of money?"

"One lives. What more does one want?"

"And in the cold weather?"

"You blow into your hands and hop from one foot on to the other while waiting for customers."

"Quite so. And how long do you think you can go on like this?"

"As long as God gives me health and strength. And after that perhaps the children will remember that they have a father."

"Ah!" Mordecai pricked up his ears. He was getting at his point. "So you have children. Sons?"

- "No, daughters only. Two God bless 'em. One married in Boston. The other going to be."
 - "Going to be? A good match eh?"
- "Thank God, thank God. A young man when God said there should be a young man he meant my Dora's betrothed."
 - "Indeed? Why, what's his business?"
- "So should I know of sorrows as I know what his business is. They don't tell me and I don't ask. I've no time. When I am at home I learn Talmud. You see I'm an old man and there is still such a lot to learn."
 - "Perhaps you don't even know his name?"
- "Louie, that's what my daughter calls him. I don't know his family name."
- "And you, a father, are satisfied that your daughter takes up with a man whose proper name even you don't know?"
- "She knows all right. I can trust her she's a good girl. She won't take up with any loafer from the street. They're going to be married in three months' time. The other foot, please."

Mordecai bit his lip. The identification was complete. As he had surmised — waiting for the three months to be up, the young scamp. Quickly he handed the old man a dollar bill and under cover of his amazement hurried away. Mendel came up to him nervously.

"Don't be frightened," said Mordecai grimly.
"You did quite right. I should never have believed it if I hadn't seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears. Heavens — the daughter of a shoe-shine!"

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"Well, and what are you going to do, Mr. Spiegelberg?"

"Strangle you if you don't leave me this minute."
Mordecai felt that he had no one to blame but himself. Amid his multi-presidential duties he had neglected to keep his own house in order. He had troubled so much about other people's children that he had taken no thought for his own one and only child, who no longer even had a mother to keep guard over him. But he would neglect him no more. That evening at supper Mordecai protracted the meal greatly beyond its usual duration. He saw that Louie was fidgeting impatiently.

"I'm staying in to-night, Louie," Mordecai said at last.

"That's right, papa. Take it easy for once," replied Louie, rising from the table.

"Won't you keep me company? We don't see much of each other."

"I'm sorry, I can't," said Louie, embarrassed.
"I have an engagement."

"No, you haven't. You're going to stay in, too, Louie."

"I really can't, papa. Another time."

"No, sir; this time. The bootblack's daughter will have to do without you."

Louie started back and then broke into a ringing laugh.

"So you found me out, eh, you clever old papa? Well, papa, if you were only to see her —"

"I'm not going to see her. Nor are you — never again."

And before the boy could recover from his bewil-

derment, Mordecai was confronting him, drawn to his full height, grim and inevitable as fate itself.

"I'll cut it short, Louie. Make up your mind between me and the bootblack's daughter."

"Well, papa, I'll be short, too. I guess it's the bootblack's daughter."

"Then you understand that we're through with each other, we two."

"That's up to you, I suppose, papa."

"And also that there's not another penny of mine coming to you. You'd better see about getting your own living, and do it quick."

"Don't worry about that, papa. I shall make my own living all right, all right."

For many hours Mordecai Spiegelberg lay awake that night, the prey of his conflicting emotions, listening in vain for the rattle of Louie's latch-key. The same the next night. The following morning, it being Sabbath, Mordecai went to synagogue and sat in his presidental seat. But his keen wits speedily perceived that a strange atmosphere was pervading the place. There was an air of suppressed excitement, and presently, to his astonishment and chagrin, he became aware that he was the cause and objective of it. He saw people nudging one another, whispering and covertly pointing at On some of the faces there was an unmistakable snigger. Evidently his breach with his son had become bruited abroad. And yet there must be something more than that. Their attitude towards such a domestic misfortune, which might happen to any one of them, should have been one of silent sym-

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pathy. Instead he was plainly affording them amusement.

Not till that evening, being too proud to ask, did he get at the heart of the mystery. Mendel Kugelman came and told him. Mordecai turned very white.

"Thank you, Mendel," he said with a gasp. "You're always bringing me good news, Jonah that you are. All right. I'll see for myself. To-morrow morning again at Delancey Street."

And true enough, that Sunday morning the great Mordecai Spiegelberg, who employed three hundred operatives, quaffed his cup of bitterness and humiliation to the dregs. For there, against the hoarding, right next to old Lipman Lazarus, was his son Louie, a shoe-blacking box in front of him, yelling for customers with the loudest of the vociferous crew. Louie saw his father stalking down on him, but not a muscle of his smooth handsome young face moved.

"I want to talk to you, Louie," said Mordecai, his own face set as in a vise.

"Yes, sir," said Louie, springing up readily and stepping to the curb.

"I think you've got to the limit of your monkeytricks, my boy," Mordecai said in an even, measured tone. "You've made me the laughing-stock of the whole world, and that's about enough."

"Well, you kicked me out of your own business, and so I took up that of my future father-in-law. It's as honest as yours, ain't it?"

"That's enough, I say. Come home this instant."

"Oh, then it's all right about Dora?" said Louie,

eagerly.

"I don't know anything about any Dora and I don't want to know. I forgive you for getting my name bandied about from mouth to mouth, but I won't stand by and see you making a mess of your life. Come along at once and don't let's have any fuss."

"It's you that's making the fuss, papa," said Louie soberly. "See here, papa, I love this girl and she loves me. She's poor, I know, but her heart's of gold. It's just your foolish pride of purse that makes you stand between me and her. Now, come, will you let me marry her?"

"You'll marry the girl I want you to marry."

"Don't look like it, papa, seeing that you object to Dora," said Louie with a whimsically rueful shake of his head. "Well, papa, glad to have had this chat with you, but now you must excuse me. I'm missing a lot of customers. Can't afford it these hard times."

Mordecai Spiegelberg walked slowly away, his son's trade-cry shrilling after him. So he strode on, his head low down on his chest as though his brain had become too heavy for him with the burden of his thoughts. Mendel, who had watched the scene from a discreet distance, slunk along at his heels with a sort of breathless awe, like a man who has been mixed up in some great upheaval of nature and wonders to find himself still alive to tell the tale. Suddenly Mordecai turned on him, his expression of face showing plainly that he did not consider himself beaten yet. Mendel Kugelman seemed to get

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an inkling how this man had made a hundred thousand dollars out of nothing.

- "Take me to the girl," rapped out Mordecai.
- "To the girl —"

"The girl, I said, you idiot. I suppose you know what girl I mean. I'm going to learn a chapter or two of the Psalms with her, don't you know."

Some ten minutes later Mordecai Spiegelberg groped his way up a dark rickety staircase, and, as directed, knocked at the left-hand door on the second story. It was opened from within, and Mordecai stepped into the room, a mean room, sparsely and poorly furnished and yet glorified by the apparition that confronted his astonished gaze. She did not seem in any way typical of the Book of Psalms, but she seemed to waft to him memories of the Song of Songs, with its allusions to Roses of Sharon and young Cedars of Lebanon. strange fragrance came trailing from the shimmering coils of her hair, and her slender form in its simple cotton dress swayed with a rhythmic grace as though she were moving to an unheard music. And yet in her deep luminous eyes there seemed imprisoned all the lightnings that had once flashed round the heights of Hermon. She looked at her visitor with a naïve, almost childlike wonder.

- "Who is it you're looking for?" she asked in a rich, mellow voice.
 - "You. Aren't you Miss Dora Lazarus?"
- "I am, sir. And you..." She suddenly clasped her hands and her voice sank to a trembling murmur of joy. "Oh, and you are my Louie's father. I can see the likeness. Oh, I am so glad,

so glad!" she rambled on. "He said you would soon make it up again — you were the best father in the world and only wanted him to be happy. Oh, believe me, there is nothing in the world that I wouldn't do to see you and him friends once more."

Mordecai Spiegelberg's face assumed a cast-iron look, all the more because he felt his heart turning to butter. Then he pulled himself up taut. This would never do. He had not come here to be wheedled and cajoled by a sly minx of a girl who evidently had learnt the art of playing on people's heart-strings.

"So you would do anything in the world to see us friends again," he repeated with a grim emphasis. "Would you even give him up?"

She shrank back with a choked cry of dismay.

"See here, Miss Lazarus. It wouldn't be fair to you to beat about the bush. The reason I am here is to tell you, in plain words, that a marriage between you and my son is impossible."

"Impossible!"

"I shall never consent to it. I have other plans for him. Besides, by becoming his wife, you'll be making a very bad bargain. Do you think you could live on his earnings as a bootblack?"

"I would be satisfied with anything."

"Yes, you would. But what about him? It may be all right during the honeymoon. What about afterwards? Don't be surprised if one of these days he wakes up to the fact that you have ruined his career and tells you so."

Over her glorious eyes had spread a dull film of horror. Her lips moved as though trying to iterate those last dreadful words, but they produced no sound. Mordecai was quick to note the effect and to turn it to good use.

"Now, Miss Lazarus, I'll make you a practical proposition. On condition that you give up my son I am prepared to pay you one thousand dollars. Just think what that would mean to you and your old father. You could set up with it a nice little store . . ."

"I can see you're an excellent business man, Mr. Spiegelberg," she said, some of those captive lightnings breaking loose. "You want to get off cheap."

"Cheap — a thousand dollars cheap?"

"Dirt cheap. You know as well as I do that if I were to sue your son for breach of promise I could easily get five times that amount. But make it two thousand and I'll accept your offer."

Mordecai gasped, not so much at the size of the sum as at the cold mercenary ring of her words. And this was the woman his son had wished to make his wife! It did not take Mordecai long to arrive at a decision.

"Will you oblige me with pen and ink, please?"
He make out the check and handed it to her.
She took and examined it with keen, cold deliberation. Then, suddenly without warning, she tore it into shreds which she threw at his feet.

"Thank you, Mr. Spiegelberg," she said, her tone and look consuming him with their scorn. "I only wanted to make sure that you hated me to the extent of two thousand dollars. I am quite convinced. I shall give up your son"—her voice trem-



bled momentarily—"but I shall do it of my own free will. I don't want to be bought or bribed. I only ask you one thing. Don't tell him you have been here."

"I would sooner you put it on a business footing and took the money," said Mordecai, standing his ground sturdily for all his surprise. "How do I know you mean what you say?"

"I give you my word for it, and my word is better than your check. Allow me."

And before Mordecai knew what had happened she had shown him out through the door and he found himself making his way down the dark rickety staircase. Mendel, hanging about below, watched him come out but knew better than to go near him. He guessed that Mordecai had succeeded, as he might be expected to do, but that ghastly smile of his did not seem to invite congratulations.

Mordecai Spiegelberg went home and waited, feeling extremely dubious as to the outcome of his experiment. He could not shake off the notion that in some way he had been hoodwinked, that there was some trick behind it all. And therefore he could hardly believe his eyes when, late that evening, he saw his son Louie, or rather the ghost of him, stagger with a spent and weary air into the sitting room. Mordecai sprang forward, but without any form of salutation the young man brushed past him and sat down heavily on the sofa.

"What's the matter?" Mordecai asked uneasily. To tell the truth he felt some alarm about the impending reckoning with his hot-headed young son,

but Louie showed about as much spirit as a boiled cauliflower.

"Nothing is the matter, papa. Everything is all right."

"Will you have something to eat?"

"Eat?" echoed Louie with a gesture of repugnance. "I shall never eat again."

"Oh, come, come," said Mordecai, glancing away from him. "Is — is it about this girl?"

"Girl you call her!" cried Louie bitterly. "Well, one of these days I hope to find a name for her. Yes, you were quite right, papa. She would have made a mess of my life. Thank God, I found her out in time."

"Yes, yes — go on," Mordecai prompted him soothingly.

"She's won two thousand dollars in the lottery and . . ."

"What's that?" exclaimed Mordecai.

"And she said that now she could make a better match than a bootblack," Louie went on, staring in front of him.

"She told you she had won two thousand dollars in the lottery — when did she say that?"

"This evening, when I got back from work. And I didn't even know she was playing."

"Are you sure she wasn't fooling you?" Mordecai inquired anxiously.

"Fooling me — when she flung this back at me?" Louie shouted fiercely, snatching from his pocket the solitaire ring and hurling it across the room.

Mordecai went and deliberately picked it up.

"I wouldn't do that, Louie. You may want it

again. Well, what do you say now to Debby Feinstein?"

Louie rose and looked at him wildly.

"Say, papa, if you ever mention to me Debby Feinstein again or any other girl, I'll jump from the top of the Woolworth Building — and without a parachute. I'll never, never get married. My heart's broke, just broke."

And sobbing — after all he was little more than a boy — he rushed from the room.

Mordecai looked after him, drawing a deep breath. He knew the worst was over. And yet, strangely enough, he could not dismiss Dora Lazarus from his mind. She was quite a remarkable young person and seemed to clamor for rather more notice than he had given her. The next afternoon he sent for Mendel Kugelman.

" Mendel, I've got a job for you."

" Really?" queried Mendel expectantly.

"That Lazarus girl — I want you to go and propose a match to her."

"What, with your Louie?" came incautiously from Mendel.

"Yes, with my Louie," said Mordecai with quiet sarcasm. "I haven't taken enough trouble to get him away from her. I want it all over again. No, you just go and tell her you've got the richest, hand-somest young man she can figure to herself. And he won't want a single penny for a dowry."

"Oh, Mr. Spiegelberg — I can make matches, but I can't make miracles. Besides, in my way of business, I usually ask the young man first. Who's the young man?"

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"Anybody you like. Just do as I tell you. Tell her all the lies you can — there's no one I would trust better than you to do that."

"Oh, please, Mr. Spiegelberg — you do me too much honor!"

"Ah, all great men are modest. Go and see her to-night, if possible, and bring me her answer."

"All right, Mr. Spiegelberg," said Mendel, shrugging his shoulders at the strange task. "I'll do my best. But . . ." And he poised significantly on the word.

"Oh, of course. Take this. You've earned it."

Joyously Mendel snatched at the fifty-dollar bill and went. When he returned, he had the air of a man who had just come away from the sickbed of one near and dear to him.

"Well?" said Mordecai quickly.

"Don't ask me, Mr. Spiegelberg. I wouldn't do another job like this for a million."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Poor child, poor child — and I coming to play a joke on her!" wailed Mendel remorsefully. "Well, I'll tell you. She listens very quietly to what I've got to say to her, and at the end she says with a smile — on no Jewish face again may I see such a smile! — she says: 'Thank you, Mr. Kugelman, but I've had all the young men I'm going to have. If you were to bring me one with a golden crown I wouldn't look at him.' And with that she plumps into a chair and weeps and weeps — I expect she's weeping still. Tell you what, Mr. Spiegelberg. That girl looks out like a lady."

"Well, suppose she does? What's that got to do with you?"

"Only this, Mr. Spiegelberg. She reminded me that I'm a gentleman, or ought to be. Will you do me a favor?"

"I don't know, Mendel."

"Take back this bill. It feels—it feels like blood-money."

"As you please, as you please," said Mr. Spiegelberg indifferently, crumpling the bill into his waistcoat pocket.

But Mr. Spiegelberg was not as indifferent to Mendel's action as he had made himself appear. One result of it was that it caused him to reconsider his philosophy, in fact, his whole attitude towards life. Everybody, it seemed, was throwing his money back in his face. The world had gone mad—money had lost its value. What was it that had taken its place? He would try and find out.

He did. As was right and fitting it was to Mendel Kugelman that he first imparted the outcome of his investigations. Three nights later Mendel had occasion to visit Mordecai again. It was rather an awkward and disagreeable errand that brought him there, and he approached the house with a great quaking of heart. Somewhat to his surprise he saw the parlor windows brightly illuminated. The Spiegelbergs had company. His gorge rose within him. These rich people had no feelings. He contrasted those bright-gleaming windows with the gloom of poor Dora Lazarus' humble dwelling. He compared Mordecai's broad, beaming countenance, as he came bustling into the hall, with Dora's

peaked, grief-stricken face as he had seen it last. And — he could scarcely master his indignation — he actually heard Louie Spiegelberg's ringing laugh from the room beyond.

"Well, Mendel, what's the matter now?" Mordecai asked genially.

"I hope you won't mind, Mr. Spiegelberg, but I've come to put right a little mistake I made."

"A mistake, Mendel?" asked Mordecai sharply.

"You know, Mr. Spiegelberg, or perhaps you don't know, that I'm a very good husband."

"So you ought to be. A wholesale maker of husbands like yourself ought to be his own best sample."

"Yes, Mr. Spiegelberg. And I've never kept a secret from my Rachel. But I didn't know what to do with this wretched business about Dora Lazarus. And to-day I couldn't keep it any longer and I out with it."

"Well, what did she say about it?"

"She's a dear good woman, is my Rachel. But I'd sooner not tell you all she said, or all the names she called me. But she made one very sensible remark."

"What was that?"

"She said I didn't do poor Dora any good by giving back your fifty-dollar bill and myself a great deal of harm. And also if I didn't go and ask you to let me have it back again a great deal more harm would happen to me. I won't say that my life is in danger, but it's rather serious for me all the same. So, perhaps, dear Mr. Spiegelberg, you will try me with that bill of yours again."

"Certainly not."

Mendel fell back a step or two, not with the shock of disappointment, but with a positive spasm of surprise at the sight of an old man who just then issued from the parlor and whom, despite his resplendent suit of broad-cloth and well-trimmed love-locks and beard, he recognized to be no other than Lipman Lazarus, the boot-black.

"Am I asleep and dreaming?" cried Mendel

dramatically.

"If you are, come and I'll wake you up," said Mordecai with a laugh. And taking Mendel by the arm he dragged him into the parlor, where Mendel encountered Louie and Dora seated close together on the sofa and just sheepishly drawing their heads apart as the others entered.

"Children," said Mordecai, "here's our old friend Mendel come to wish you 'good luck.' It's a good sign he should be first, because he really

made the match."

"Made it?" almost screamed Mendel. "Why, I

did my very best to unmake it."

"Ah, we unloosed the knot so that we could tie it again more good and proper," said Mordecai, blinking something from his eyes. Then he faced Mendel abruptly. "Well, and now what about your commission?"

"Why, you just now refused to let me have back my fifty dollars," replied Mendel in sulky bewilder-

ment.

"So I did. And I'm not a man to go back on my word. So we'll just have to change the figure," continued Mordecai, smiling slyly. "Here's one

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fifty dollars for your first information. Here's another fifty for finding out that Dora is a lady. Here's another for finding out that you're a gentleman. And here's a fourth for your Rachel, who has been put to the trouble of calling you names. Now does that square it?"

"Square it?" cried Mendel ecstatically. "I'll never make another match in my life. Instead I'll go in for unmaking 'em."

"Ah," said Mordecai, stroking Dora's damask cheek with a penitent and paternal tenderness, "but first find out they weren't already made in heaven—like this one."

THE STOLEN BLESSING

HE reading-room of the Mile End Mission to the Jews looked homely and comfortable. The floor was thickly carpeted. In the hearth burnt a cheery blaze. It was altogether a nice place to be in on a raw and sleety February night such as this. The three or four individuals with foxy hangdog faces, who were dotted about the chamber, seemed to think so, as they sat abmorbed over their volumes or papers. The Rev. Michael Rubenstein, sitting at the librarian's desk, engaged on his task of compiling his bibliographical catalogue of the collection under his charge, seemed to think so too.

They all looked up at the entrance of a young man, who remained standing on the threshold, eyeing the scene with the timid curiosity of a stranger. The Rev. Michael Rubenstein rose instantly, walked towards him, and with outstretched hand gave him the customary Jewish greeting. A look of diffident gladness spread over the newcomer's face. He followed with alacrity the invitation to draw near to the blazing fire.

"I have been walking the streets for two days and two nights," he explained piteously. "My brother came to fetch me off the ship, and as we made our way along we happened on a crowd, and before I knew what had occurred we had got

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separated. I have been trying to find him — but as well look for a needle in a haystack. I hardly even know what he looks like. It's fifteen years since he left Kamorka."

The Rev. Michael Rubenstein gave a start.

"Kamorka — is that where you come from?" he asked.

"Yes, in Podolia, you know."

The Rev. Rubenstein nodded. Oh, yes, he knew quite well where Kamorka was.

"We will help you to find your brother," he said presently. "And, meanwhile, you may stay with us."

"But I have no money to pay you," cried the young man despairingly.

"Never mind the money. Aren't we all Jews and brothers?"

A light of gratitude leapt up in the stranger's weary eyes.

"Oh, I knew God would not desert me. With a beating heart I entered this place, seeing the Hebrew inscription over the door, not knowing what sort of a welcome I might find. . . ."

"Let me see," broke in the Rev. Rubenstein, with averted eyes. "You have a famous Rabbi in your town, haven't you?"

"A great and famous Rabbi — Napthali Sophar."

"He must be very old now — is he well?"

"As well as he can be under the visitation God has sent upon him."

The Rev. Rubenstein nodded again. He knew all about the Kamorkan Rabbi's misfortune.

"But the Rabbi's wife died last year," continued the young man.

A strained look came into the Rev. Rubenstein's face.

"So the Rabbi's wife died last year — indeed — indeed," he echoed vacantly. He broke off, following the direction of the stranger's eyes which had become distended with horror. "What has come over you, dear friend?"

"What — what is that?" quavered the young man, pointing to a crucifix hung in a recess by the side of the fire-place.

"That's nothing — don't take any notice of it," murmured the Rev. Rubenstein confusedly.

The young man had risen to his feet, and stood looking about him, trembling in every limb.

"God in heaven, what is this place I have come to? Oh, I see it all now—I see it all. This is one of the abominations they warned me against in this great city before I left home, where they ensnare the unwary with smooth words and fawning lips—it is an accursed place and all who set foot in it are accursed—let me go—let me go..."

And in a wild panic of fear he flung out through the door.

The men in the room looked after him with a listless smile, and then with a shrug settled back to their reading. It was not the first time they had witnessed a scene like this. The Rev. Rubenstein also stepped back to his seat at the desk and resumed his cataloguing. His composure, if anything, was even more complete than that of the others. But his left hand pressed furtively

against his side to subdue the beating of his heart. The loathing and contempt of the poor wretch, who had just fied from his polluting presence, left him unmoved. He knew he was anathema maranatha to those whose faith he had abjured. Long years of habit had made him proof to gibes and sneers. He even admitted freely to himself that his was not a case of having been snared by ambush, of being taken in by smooth words and fawning lips. His had been a deliberate act of mad reprisal against the hide-bound bigotry in which his youth had been spent and pent. Perhaps he had not really intended to go so far. But once having leapt the boundary he had stayed on the other side. The force of circumstances, the physical cowardice, which had made him hug his easy comforts, had been too much for him. He had taken his choice and would not go back on it. There was a principle even in being unprincipled.

And now, suddenly—everything had taken a new complexion to itself. He realized all at once the vague fear that had dogged him night and day. Some time or other, he had foreboded, something would happen to rouse his slumbering conscience to wakefulness. And it had happened to-night. In the voice of the young man from Kamorka had spoken the voice of the past. And it whispered into his ear the heinousness of his trespass. And so it would continue to whisper. No loud clarion call, but just a thin steady trickle of sound, worming itself into his brain and nagging him to madness. He thought of the legend of Titus and the gnat—was it not an allegory of the retributive



pangs that racked the wrongdoer? And that for the future would be his lot. He might flee ever so far, but he would never escape it. His head drooped low on his chest—the pen fell from his nerveless fingers.

And then gradually, through the clammy murkiness of his despair, there stole a wanly flickering ray of hope. He might yet save himself. It was a desperate remedy that remained for him. In a distant corner of the world there lived the old man whose latter years he had made a long-drawn agony. If he could but set eyes once more on his father's face, hear his voice addressed to him not in scorn but in kindness — perhaps even to feel the touch of his hand, it would be an assuaging memory to mitigate the martyrdom of the years to come.

For his mother he was too late. She was gone beyond the reach of his cruelty and his remorse, the woman with the patient eyes. How she had striven with all her feeble strength, with all her tears and with all the feigned laughter of her breaking heart, to keep peace between the two warring natures, both of which she had loved so dearly, to stave off the slow but inevitable day of crisis. He must leave her out of account. There was only his father to reckon with. Yes, he would go and see his father — and the rest he must leave to God.

Go and see his father — ah, that was easily said. He clenched his hands with a sudden anger of impotence. No doubt that was but part of his punishment, to have the remedy dangled temptingly before his eyes only to be foiled by the knowledge of

its impossibility. How could he show himself in Kamorka? Despite the lapse of years he was bound to be recognized and to be hounded out of the place like the pariah he deserved to be. Wearily he leant his head in both hands. No, no, it was useless. And then his eyes, straying vacantly over the new page of the catalogue he had just finished, fastened themselves suddenly to one of the entries.

"The Book of Esther, critically and exegetically annotated by . . ."

He gave a quick gasp, rendered almost breathless by the idea which had flashed across his mind. Hastily he rummaged in his drawer for a Hebrew almanac, and turned the pages. Quite so—as he thought. In a little more than a fortnight his former co-religionists would be celebrating the Feast of Purim. That would give him the chance, the only chance, that might ever offer. The other occupants of the room looked up at the queer noise that came from him. It might be construed into a chuckle and at the same time it sounded like a sob. Probably the Rev. Michael Rubenstein himself was not quite certain which it was.

II

He knew there was no time to lose. The same night he asked for and readily obtained the required leave of absence. He gave no details and did not state his destination. It was sufficient that he had received a sudden call to go forth and preach the Word, for the Rev. Rubenstein stood high in the esteem of his superiors at



the Mile End Mission for sincerity and zeal. Two days later he found himself at the Austrian frontier. As a native of Russia he had been unable to obtain an official passport, but he safely crossed the frontier by one of the unofficial means devised for eluding the vigilance of the double-headed Eagle.

He alighted from the train some twenty miles from Kamorka, found a lodging, and forthwith began his preparations. But despite the secrecy he tried to observe, he could not prevent rumors of his enterprise from leaking out. A few days before Purim the whole district was agog with the news from Kaban of the wonderful Purim-player who was there rehearing his Purim-play. He was a strange fellow, was this actor, it was said. had come from nobody knew where. He hardly ever showed himself out of doors. He was apparently not in the business for a living, seeming to be well provided with the world's goods. He had selected for his troupe the ablest mummers he could find, and had come to a rather unusual arrangement with them as to profits. Instead of going on sharing terms he had farmed the proceeds and was paying his fellow-actors out of his own pocket, and that very handsomely too. The play he was producing was said to be a masterpiece. However, the most curious thing of all was that there was to be only one performance of it. But where this was to take place remained a strict secret.

It was about eight o'clock on the evening of the Feast when a large sledge, drawn by two spanking horses, jangled into Kamorka. Like magic the tidings spread who the arrivals were — why, nothing less than the great Purim-players from Kaban. So Kamorka had been chosen as the place where the performance was to be held, and Kamorka would be able to lift its head high above its neighbors as a temple of taste and intelligence where true art was most appreciated.

Slowly the procession — for such it had become — wound in the direction of the market-place. Ah, at last the secret was out. Of course, that was where the mummers were going — to Klounomos Nossig. Klounomos had engaged them as a special treat and a surprise for his guests that evening — Klounomos, with his sixteen flour mills, could well afford a little luxury like that. He was paying them a hundred roubles, two hundred — by the time they reached the rich miller's house the figure was a thousand.

And then a strange thing happened. The sledge did not pull up at Klounomos Nossig's house. Instead it branched off to the right down the narrow alley that led to the Synagogue. Could it be that they were going to the Rabbi's? Perhaps they had heard that the Rabbi had refused all invitations to spend the festival at the house of any of his congregants. Well, it was a fine and charitable idea to cheer the lonely old man, but nevertheless it was rather quixotic to come for it all the way from Kaban, if it was indeed true that there was to be only a single performance of the piece. Nobody, however, felt inclined to ask questions of the silent man, the chief of the troupe, who sat next to the driver, his face muffled up almost to his eyes in the

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collar of his thick fur coat. He seemed to exhale an air of mystery and aloofness which extended to the other members of his troupe and which was hardly in keeping with the frank untrammeled jollity of the season.

The Rev. Rubenstein was silent, but his eyes were all the busier. Furtively he scanned the crowd. Many were the faces he recognized—men and women with whom, as children, he had played in this his native place. But he felt quite safe. He knew that in the big, broad-shouldered Haman, fierce-bearded and bushy-browed, no one would recognize the peaky little Michael of so many years ago. He had taken good care that his disguise should be impenetrable.

But the thought that he was so near to the achievement of his heart's desire, that in a few minutes he would be face to face with his father, unnerved him. The trick he was about to play on the old man appeared to him an act of sacrilege. He swallowed a sob. What would he have? Men like him had lost the right of being squeamish about ways and means. It was only honest men who could dare to walk a straight road. Crookedness, hypocrisy had been his stock-in-trade, and by devious paths only was he allowed to stumble back into the open high-road of life.

Stiffly he descended from the sledge. Followed by the eager throng, he found himself pushed into the spacious sitting-room of the Rabbi's dwelling, which was considered more or less a public room, since it was also the Beth-Hamedrash of the town. As out of a long-forgotten dream, the familiar scene dawned upon his consciousness. From out the abysmal gulf of time he had stepped back into the happy days when his place was here by right. The dripping tallow candles which illuminated the chamber suddenly blazed up with a prismatic splendor. No, no, that was not in the day's business. He had not come here to weep—his part here was to be merry and to make others merry. And he must play his part.

The actor who was taking the rôle of Mordecai had already started the prologue, and presently the fun became fast and furious. Speedily the audience had to admit the truth of the report which had preceded this wonderful performance. Never had there been such a Purim-play. Wit and wisdom flashed with bewildering scintillations. Prickly paradoxes and amazing aphorisms followed each other in swift succession.

But the Haman! Well, if there never had been such a play there certainly had never been such a Haman. Such grotesqueries, such drolleries, such excruciating antics! Once the Rev. Rubenstein felt inclined himself to join in the hilarity he provoked. It was when the thought flashed across him what the people at the Mission would say to this novel method of preaching the Word.

Beyond that, however, he was conscious of nothing save the face of the old man in front of him, a sad indulgent smile lurking over the noble features. Oh, how old he looked, and how tired! And beside the old man there stood a vacant chair. There it stood — a silent monument to the memory of the woman with the patient eyes. Had her patience

stood the strain of her affliction — had her love endured even when her patience had flickered out? If only he had thought of his daring plan a year ago he might have been able to see for himself. As it was he must be content with smaller mercies, Perhaps it was just as well. What mask is there that would be proof against the second-sight of a mother's heart. . . .

The play had come to an end amid salvos of applause. The dreamy eyes of the old Rabbi looked up with a keen air of intelligence as the man who had played Haman stepped up to him. For a moment he fumbled in his pocket and then drew out a silver coin. "There, my son," he said. "The gift is small, but the heart is in the giving."

The Rev. Rubenstein put forward his hand, and then suddenly pulled it back again. The boldness of the thought, which had come to him on the instant, held him tongue-tied. All he had craved for was a look, a word from his father. But perhaps — perhaps he might gain something more, something which his wildest hopes had not promised him. He could but try — it was worth a trial.

"Money is not the reward I ask for," he said, his voice clear and firm. "There is something of greater value you have to bestow without making yourself a copeck the poorer."

"What would you have, my son?"

"Your blessing, master."

The words were almost lost in the roar of laughter that greeted them from the audience. They had listened to many an excellent quip to-night, but surely this surpassed them all. The idea of

Haman, the traditional persecutor of their race, the proverbial foe of Israel, coming forward to ask as his reward a blessing from one of those on whom but a moment ago he had poured the vials of his scurrilous scorn! Such a paradox was nothing short of a stroke of genius.

But the old Rabbi did not join in the laugh. For a little while he sank his head pensively, and then, with uplifted hand, demanded silence.

"You have spoken a true word, my son, although you may only have meant it in jest," he said gently. "Blessings are better than money, for they are current coin in the World-to-come. I have dispensed many blessings in my time, but you shall be specially favored. Listen, friend. There was one who was very dear to me, but now he is dead. In the storehouse of my heart I have treasured up, separately and apart, all the benedictions that should have fallen to his share. Of those I can spare you one without noticing the loss. May the Lord make you like unto Ephraim and Menasseh. Go in peace."

III

The next morning the Purim-player disappeared as mysteriously as he had come. He stayed just long enough to hear the news that the Rabbi of Kamorka had died shortly after midnight. Probably the excitement of the Purimplay had affected him too strongly, people said—he was such an old man, and ailing.

But the Rev. Rubenstein did not believe it.

knew he had not precipitated his father's death. By the goodness of God, his father had been allowed to live just long enough to redeem his erring son by his blessing. The last act of the good shepherd had been to gather his best-loved lamb back into the flock.

The whole matter was a source of much puzzlement and grief to the folks at the Mile End Mission. When their dear brother and faithful comrade-in-God had exceeded his leave by a month, they became anxious and made inquiries, but without result. When three months had passed, they held an Intercession Service to pray for his safety and swift return. The Intercession Service bore no better fruit. At the end of six months his landlord sold all his unclaimed effects and appropriated the proceeds for rent.

In a garret on the East Side of New York the Rev. Michael Rubenstein — or, rather, the person who had been the Rev. Michael Rubenstein — ekes out a scanty living by teaching little boys their Aleph-Beth. But, for all that, he thinks himself rich with the wealth surpassing the greed of man. He holds a treasure which he obtained by stealth, the blessing he had smuggled from his father's lips and had carried away with him, a precious contraband. And yet he often wonders whether it was really a theft, or whether it had been given with the full knowledge of the giver as to who the recipient was. Perhaps the woman with the patient eyes had been sitting unseen in the vacant chair and had told him.

THE LIGHTER SENTENCE

HE Maggid had preached very well, the Chazan had read excellently, and Fischel Finkelstein had said his prayers with unusual devoutness this Rosh Hashono. He felt he had never enjoyed his prayers so much. And he would have enjoyed his lonely midday meal in proportion if he had not been troubled by the thought that he had had no letter from his son Baruch this Yomtov. His son Baruch - or Berthold, as he had taken to calling himself when he entered as student at Vienna University — was no doubt very busy preparing for his examinations, but even so he might surely have written his father a line giving him the usual compliments of the season. he needn't even have done that. If he had only just scribbled a postcard to say he was well, it would have been quite sufficient.

Fischel, having finished his meal, fetched out his Gemorah, laid his snuff-box next to him, and wiped his spectacles. Then having got so far he suddenly closed the book again, put the snuff-box back into his pocket, and replaced his glasses in their case. No, this afternoon he would do no studying. This afternoon he would devote to communing with his son Baruch. On week days he had no time for it. On week days he had to work hard to keep his son

in decency and comfort at the University. For three years he had done it now, and a chandler's shop was no very profitable concern. But he had undertaken it, and he must carry it out.

When his wife died he made up his mind that his only child should become the greatest man his native town of Pshemishel had ever produced. Baruch had given promise of it as a boy at school, and from reports which came from the University he was in a fair way of achieving his father's ambition.

From reports — that was all Fischel had to go upon. It was three years since he had seen his son. But then the quarterly remittances he sent him left doubtless no margin for the expensive journey from Vienna to the distant Galician town. However, even that did not matter. In fact, it was much better so. His father's pride would be all the greater if he dawned upon his dazzled townsmen as a full-fledged doctor. If only he kept in good health and —

Fischel sat up with a start as the creaking of the opening door broke in upon his meditations. He showed no exuberant joy when he saw that his visitor was Favish-Tavish. Favish-Tavish, with his foxy mien and small malevolent eyes, was nobody's friend, and no one ever got much pleasure out of communication with him.

"Well, Favish-Tavish, what's the news?" asked Fischel with as much show of politeness as the exigencies of hospitality demanded.

"News? What news should there be?" replied Favish-Tavish.

THE LIGHTER SENTENCE

"Well, you get about among people — what's the talk?"

"There — you force me to speak, and when I have told you I suppose you will call down curses on me for an ill-tongued chatter-box."

"Curses on you? God forbid!" said Fischel.

"Not that I care much to hear gossip about any one—"

"But when it's about yourself?"

"About myself?" asked Fischel, suddenly alert.

"As a matter of fact the general opinion was that you should hear nothing about it till the end of the festival. But that's not my idea. If there is evil tidings, I say — out with it. The sooner one gets accustomed to it the better. Besides, as soon as the festival is over — and it only lacks another couple of hours — you will have to start making your preparations."

Fischel had turned pale.

"Favish," he cried angrily, "either you talk or you keep silent. You say there's ill news and that it concerns me—"

"Not so vehement, my friend. Upon my word, I've never seen such a glutton for misfortune. Why, I only knew it myself an hour ago. And the paper has been in my house since the day before yesterday."

"What paper?"

"What paper? The weekly one from Vienna. I'm the only one in the whole town that has the decency to subscribe to a German Jewish newspaper. Well, who will say after to-day that I don't get my money's worth out of it? If I hadn't been

a subscriber perhaps no one would ever known about your son —"

- "About my son?" exclaimed Fischel in trembling accents.
- "Certainly. Here it stands, plain for everybody to read." He turned the pages with maddening leisureliness. "Ah, here we have it. Your son's name is Berthold Finkelstein, isn't it?"
- "That's what he calls himself in Vienna," assented Fischel.
 - "And he's a student of medicine, isn't he?"
 - "So I understand."
- "Well, then, here he figures, large as life, on the list my paper gives every week of the godless creatures who have abjured Judaism."
 - "Liar!" came in a strangled cry from Fischel.
- "I thought you wouldn't believe me, unless I brought you the proof. I even committed a breach of the festival by carrying the newspaper along with me, and that's what I get for my goodness," said Favish-Tavish in an injured tone. "But there, look at it for yourself."

Fischel's hand shook like an aspen leaf as he grasped the sheet the other thrust upon him, and his eyes swam as he tried to fix them upon the indicated spot. Painfully he spelled out the unfamiliar Gothic print, and then by degrees the letters took to themselves shape and form. Yes, there could be no doubt of it. Right at the head of the weekly Index Apostaticus stood the name of Berthold Finkelstein, student of medicine. With a low whimper he sank back into his chair.

"Of course, it's no business of mine, but I say

that's the kind of thing people must expect when they try to jump over the heads of their fellows," moralized Favish-Tavish, whose two sons worked on the bootmaker's bench. He stepped up to Fischel and tapped him on the shoulder. "Well, wasn't I right? You see there isn't much time to lose. You know what you have to do for a Meshummed. As soon as the Yomtov is over you must get the Holy Society to bring you a chair and a mourning-board and you will have to begin sitting Shiva. But you shall see, Fischel, that I'm no bad friend to you. You may count on me for Minyan at least once every day."

"Thank you — thank you," said Fischel brokenly.

"And now do me a favor and leave me by myself."

"Of course, of course — don't let it be said of Favish-Tavish that he likes to glut his heart on the grief of others. I shall be here again later on."

For some time Fischel remained seated, his head buried in his arms, stunned and stupefied by the sledge-hammer blow he had received. Then the poignancy of his grief raised him aloft and chased him up and down the chamber in an agony of despair. His son a Meshummed! No wonder he had sent him no New Year's greetings — he had not had the courage to perpetrate such an impious sarcasm.

And then gradually, through sheer physical exhaustion, Fischel quieted down again. A faint ray of hope stole into his clouded heart. There was no use denying it—he had seen it black on white with his own eyes. And yet—might there not be a mistake? Although it stood there in cold print

it might not be true after all. Perhaps it was a joke, a cruel practical joke - one had heard of such things. No, no, there must be a mistake somewhere. And there was only one way of finding He knew a train left for Cracow shortly after the conclusion of the festival. From there he would get the connection to Vienna. Yes. he would go and see for himself. It was very kind of Favish-Tavish to offer to make Minyan at the Shiva, but first it behooved one to make sure if there was any Shiva to be kept. While the rest of the house-masters were going to the evening service, Fischel stole secretly and silently off to the railway station.

He reached Vienna about ten the next morning. Half way through his journey the disquieting thought struck him that he did not know his son's domicile. His letters had all been addressed poste restante. Then a stroke of good fortune befell him. At the last station but one, a benevolent-looking old gentleman got into the compartment and to him Fischel timidly confided his dilemma.

"Oh, that's easily remedied," the benevolent-looking old gentleman assured him. "All you have to do is to go to the Registrar's office and ask him to look on the list for you."

Cheered by the good omen, Fischel took a fiacre to the University buildings, and was presently admitted to the Registrar.

"Berthold Finkelstein's address?" echoed the official. "Which Berthold Finkelstein?"

Fischel looked at him nonplussed.

"There are two Berthold Finkelsteins on our books," explained the Registrar impatiently.

"I don't know — I'm his father," said Fischel blankly.

The Registrar looked at him with an amused smile and shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I'd better give you the addresses of both, and then you can please yourself which is your son," he said.

As in a dream, Fischel groped his way out, tightly clutching the paper containing the two addresses. Little did the Registrar dream what dire significance his witticism bore for his care-worn questioner. Yes, which of these two was his son, and which of the two would he prefer to be his son? Of course, the fact that there were two Berthold Finkelsteins heightened the chances of there being a mistake in the newspaper announcement — but in whose favor was the mistake? Well, he would know soon.

With lagging gait, he made his way to the nearest of the two places. Yes, Herr Finkelstein was at home—the second étage. As Fischel knocked at the door his heart was in his mouth. The voice that called "Come in" gave him no clew. It was three years since he had heard his son's voice. But the first glance told him that this Berthold Finkelstein was not his son. He stammered his apology.

"Oh, there's no harm done," laughed the young man good-naturedly. He was a well-fed young man, with rosy cheeks and blue spectacles, and he was sitting at breakfast. "The two names being absolutely identical has of course led to a little confusion — especially in the matter of creditors' letters. Curiously enough, though, I haven't the pleasure of your son's personal acquaintance."

"Perhaps you — you won't mind my asking you a question," quavered Fischel.

"Oh, not at all."

"Do you — can you tell me to which of you two that — that announcement in the paper refers?"

"The change of religion, I presume you mean. Oh, that refers to me," replied the young man readily.

Fischel caught hold of a chair, for the room was spinning round him. Oh, thank God, thank God! His son was safe — his terror had been groundless. Favish-Tavish would be given the lie in his throat. Fischel Finkelstein would not have to sit Shiva.

"Oh, I see now," the rosy-cheeked young man was saying pleasantly. "So that's what I'm indebted to for your visit. You came to see if it wasn't your son who— Well, upon my word, if that isn't the best joke of all. Really, I'm awfully sorry to have put you to so much inconvenience." And he laughed uproariously.

Fischel shuddered. This young man had just bartered away his life everlasting, and he still could laugh!

"It is terrible," he muttered, under his breath.

"That all depends on the way you look at it," the young man took him up. "You seem to handle it tragically. To me—" And he made a gesture of indifference. "I should never have been admitted into heaven anyhow, so it really doesn't matter by

which door I get shut out of it, the one with the Mezzuzzah, or the one with the Crucifix. And now, if you'll excuse me, I'm rather busy." And he turned to the table, on which Fischel now saw stood all manner of forbidden food.

A minute later, Fischel found himself once more in the street, still dizzy and bewildered by the shock of the reaction. But when his brain cleared, his principal feeling was not one of gratitude. him was a sense of humiliation and abasement for his lack of confidence in God. Surely he could have relied upon God not to put this misfortune on him. to humble him so to the dust. His journey had been nothing but an act of implety, for which he must consider later how to make atonement. And as for his son — It suddenly came home to him how grossly he had affronted his son by his unworthy suspicions. How could he face him with the tale of what had brought him to Vienna? Perhaps it was best not to go near him at all — to return home forthwith, and let the secret remain hidden in his own heart.

Fischel walked on, torn by conflicting emotions, when his eyes suddenly alighted on the inscription at a street corner. "Rittlinger Strasse" he saw written up there. He glanced at the paper in his hand to make sure. Why, yes, that was the name of the other street — this was where his son lived. Oh, heavens, to be within a stone's-throw of the son he had not seen for three years, and to pass him by! No father's heart was strong enough for that. With a sharp swerve he turned into the street, and walked quickly along, scrutinizing the numbers.

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Here it was, No. 18 — fourth floor, the paper said. Buoyantly he mounted the stairs and knocked. A dishevelled woman opened the door half way and peered out at him.

"Herr Berthold Finkelstein — does he live here?" asked Fischel.

"Live here? Well, he used to, but, of course —"

"I'm his father," said Fischel, to obviate difficulties.

"Oh, you're his father — come in, come in," said the woman with alacrity. "You must excuse the state you find me in, Herr Finkelstein, but you can imagine how the whole business has upset me. I really don't know where I am. I hardly expected you before late to-night. I only sent the telegram off this morning. I had to look for a long time before I found your address among his papers. But I suppose you heard from another source."

"Telegram — heard from another source — heard what?" asked Fischel, vacantly.

"What, then you don't know — that your son is dead?" cried the woman.

For a few moments Fischel stood frozen into silence. Then his lips feebly framed the words:

"Dead — dead, after all. Blessed be He whose judgment is just!"

"He died yesterday, poor boy. He was only ill a day or so," the woman went on, garrulously. "I did for him what I could, but the doctor said there was no hope from the first. Something in the brain, he said—perhaps from too much study. The doctor hasn't been paid yet, by the way, Herr Finkelstein. I suppose you will see to that, won't

you? And then there is a fortnight's rent owing. That's a consideration to a poor woman like me. Besides, goodness knows when I shall let the room next. It always gives lodgings such a bad name when —"

"Where is he?" asked Fischel.

The woman tiptoed on in front, and he followed. As he entered the room, he saw something on the floor, covered with a white sheet. On a chair by the window sat a man, fast asleep. He was the watcher. Fischel walked over to the wall and lifted a corner of the white sheet. Yes, there was his son right enough — or, rather, what had been his son. The man by the window woke with a yawn and rubbed his eyes.

"Did he say the Shema before he died?" asked Fischel.

"He did," replied the man. "Not only that, but he repeated, 'the Lord, He is God,' seven times, and made confession of his sins—just as a proper Jew should."

Fischel nodded his head.

"You may leave me alone with him. I won't do him any hurt. I'm his father."

And so Fischel took up his watch over his dead son. As he sat there, staring into vacancy, the tangled skeins of destiny gradually unraveled themselves before his dim eyes. He saw exactly what had happened. On the last Judgment Day the two Berthold Finkelsteins had passed under the review of the great Judge. He had decided that both should be erased from the Book of Life. It had been decreed that one should die the death of the

soul, and the other the death of the body. To Fischel Finkelstein's son, for some transcendent merit of his, had been meted out the more merciful doom.

Immediately after the funeral, Fischel knew he would have to get back home to keep the Shiva. Favish-Tavish would come every night for Minyan. But he would not dare to show any sarcastic sneer, any mocking malevolence in his foxy face. For Fischel Finkelstein's son had not turned Meshummed; he had only died. And Fischel Finkelstein would be able to hold his head up in the sight of his fellow-men as heretofore.

A RIGHTEOUS RENEGADE

I

HOUGH there were five servants in the household of Peretz Unterweiser, the rich corn factor of Tarnow, in Galicia, it was Caroline who was in the habit of washing the weekly house linen. The slatternly wretches of maids scamped the work, and then Tzeeril Unterweiser, the wife of Peretz and the very queen of housewives, would become annoyed and begin to scold, which in turn would bring on her asthmatic cough, and, rather than permit these serious contingencies. Caroline insisted on doing the work herself. And that although she could not be said to occupy a menial position. Years and years ago, so long back, in fact, that in the meantime all trace of her surname had got lost, she had come into Peretz Unterweiser's house and had since combined the office of a paid housekeeper with that of an adopted daughter. Such was her history to date. The rest remains to be told.

Bending sturdily over the steaming tub, a strong, massively built figure of a woman, she seemed to feel nothing of the heat and the stress of the July afternoon. The sleeves of her blouse, tucked up nearly all the way to her great shoulders, displayed the whiteness of her arms above the elbows. White

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almost as snow, too, showed the lower portion of her throat where it merged into the bust, and gleaming white showed the straight even rows of teeth as she opened her mouth in a half-smile at her secret thoughts. Seemingly they were not unpleasant thoughts, for presently she straightened herself up, and throwing out her chest for a deep breath broke into a snatch of song.

As though in response to the sound came the shuffling of feet, and in the doorway of the wash-kitchen stood Tzeeril Unterweiser, her kindly eyes puckered in mock indignation.

"Hark how she sings — as if she hadn't a care in the world!"

Caroline laughed, as with two great wrenches she wrung a table-cloth dry.

"And pray, mistress, what else shall I do with my cares but sing them away?"

"Impudent hussy! There, sit down and rest yourself a moment. Don't make out that the whole world stands on your washing. I still have a towel or two to go on with. Now listen."

Caroline sat down, and leant her head back against the wall with an air of respectful resignation. Did she not know what was coming, and had she not heard it all a dozen times before? And so she now heard it all over again, that she was getting on for twenty-eight, and that, according to the notions prevalent in that part of the world, she might, despite her little bit of good looks, fairly consider herself on the shelf. By her long years of active devotion to the family, continued Tzeeril, Caroline had amply repaid any debt of gratitude

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she might owe them, and their daughter Sala was now sixteen and no longer required to be looked after by a nurse. To be too good was to be half bad, and since, as it happened, at the eleventh hour a chance offered of Caroline making a home of her own, it would be slapping providence in the face not to seize upon it. Leiser Leinkram had come again that morning and had asseverated his willingness to take Caroline "as she went and stood." that is, without a kreuzer for dowry. True, Leiser had a lame leg and three squalling children by his first wife, but he was well-to-do and respected. and a shining light in the congregation, and, all things considered, Caroline had done very well by waiting. But she was to wait no longer. Leiser had threatened that this was absolutely the last time he was asking for her, and there was no saying but that his threat was serious.

Caroline nodded assent, kissed Tzeeril's hand by way of thanks, and asked to be allowed to go back to her wash-tub so that she might think the matter over. But in the reflections to which she presently gave herself up Leiser Leinkram, despite his beautifully alliterative name and his three squalling children, had little or no part. In fact, Caroline soon left off thinking at all, and betook herself to listening. It was getting near six, and this was Monday. Every Monday about vesper time some one came and spoke to her through the open window of the wash-kitchen; perhaps that was an additional reason why Caroline preferred to occupy the wash-kitchen herself on Mondays instead of leaving it to the slatternly maids. Yes, for two or three years

now it had been that some one's practice to be at the open window on the same day of the week and at the same hour, and there was no reason why he should fail to-day. Nor, indeed, did he fail, for a few minutes later the two big brown cobs and the huge ladder-wagon of Stanislaus Strack, the carrier, rattled into Peretz Unterweiser's courtyard, where, by arrangement with Peretz, the horses were watered.

"A good evening to you, Pan Strack," called Caroline, as the other clambered down from the box-seat. He was a big, burly man, and wisely took his time over it.

"The same good evening to you, Panu Caroline," responded Stanislaus, holding out a huge palm.

"No, mine's all wet," laughed Caroline, tucking her hand behind her back.

"Ho, out with it, wet or dry!" growled Stanislaus. "'Tisn't often that I can shake so honest a hand."

And then they both laughed, for the same little coquetry of welcome repeated itself at every meeting. It seemed a sort of sign or password between them.

"And how is business, Pan Strack?"

This too was according to routine.

"As good as a fair-dealing man can expect, Panu Caroline," was the stereotyped reply.

To-night, however, after these preliminaries, there was a longer pause than usual, and Caroline was just beginning to wonder at it when Stanislaus astonished her still more by putting his hand into

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his coat pocket and drawing forth a little parcel, which he awkwardly held out to her.

"What's that, Pan Strack?" she exclaimed.

"Only a little present, Panu Caroline," stuttered Stanislaus, his eyes on the ground. "A blue alpaca apron. I bought it at the Wielitzka fair. I want you to take it as — as a sort of keepsake from me."

"Keepsake? Are you afraid I shall forget you from one week to another, Pan Strack?" laughed Caroline, but huskily.

"One week? It may be years before you see me again," said Stanislaus gruffly.

"It may be — but surely it won't, Pan Strack?" replied Caroline, with a queer sinking at her heart.

"At any rate, I shall see what I can do towards it," said Stanislaus, with a sort of sorrowful grimness. "I've settled it all. I am giving up the carrier business after this week. There is enough for me to do on the farm."

"But you can come over all the same, every now and then, Pan Strack."

Stanislaus reflected a moment. Then he raised his head and, looking straight at her, said flercely:

"What would be the good of that?"

"It all depends on how much good you expect to come of it," said Caroline, a tremulous archness in her voice.

Stanislaus came a step nearer. He was quite close to her now—their heads almost touched. Even so, she could barely catch his words:

"I am a Christian, and you are a Jewess. You will never marry me."

"Are you quite sure of that, Pan Strack?" asked Caroline, smiling at him moistly.

He seized her roughly by the arm.

"Caroline, don't make fun of me. All these years I have been carrying the thought about in my head, and I never had the courage to speak it. It only made me curse the girls as they ogled me coming out of church on Sundays. They none could work like you, they none could talk like you, they none had eyes and teeth like you. Come to me. Caroline — you will never regret it."

Caroline bore his tightening grip without win-

cing.

"Listen," she said, with flying breath; "to become your wife I must first become of your faith—can it be any other way?"

His despairing silence was enough answer for her.

"I know — I know," she hurried on. "You dare not. It would mean your life — our lives. They would burn down your farm on our wedding night. But suppose I do as you ask me? The people I live with love me as their very own. But as great as their love has been, so great will be their hatred. They will make me an outcast, they will call me an abomination. If I come to you I must give up not only my God, but also my people."

"That means you will stay!" he flung at her.

"That means, Stanislaus, that I love you more than anything in heaven or on earth . . ."

She hushed his eager cry of joy and continued more calmly.

"But you must take me away from here quickly,

at once — to-night, if possible. If I stay here longer they may find out, or I myself may blurt out the secret, and then there would be no second chance. They would watch me closely; they would hold me back by force; they would lure me from you with kind words."

"Yes, yes, to-night, Caroline," breathed Stanislaus.

"I can stay in the convent till all is ready for the wedding. But you must take me away from here to-night, Stanislaus. I shall slip out as soon as everything is quiet in the house. Don't fail me, Stanislaus."

"Fail you?" And then in quick succession he kissed her a dozen times. "That means twelve o'clock. Do you think I shall forget now?"

There was an unnecessary and unsuspected witness to the ratifying of the compact. Pretty sixteen-year old Sala, Peretz and Tzeeril Unterweiser's only child, was tip-toeing into the wash-kitchen on one of her customary surprise visits to her Caroline. She would hide behind the door for a little while, give a leap into the kitchen and utter a loud whoop! And Caroline would pretend to scream with fright, and altogether it was great fun. It was a game they had played ever since Sala was a tiny toddler.

But this time she did not get further than hiding behind the door and peeping in. It was a strange and disconcerting thing to see Caroline being kissed by a man, even if it was only their old friend, redfaced Stanislaus Strack, and to hear her make midnight assignations with him. So Sala determined to look into the matter. She did not undress when she got to her room that evening, but sat watching for Caroline's movements. And, surely enough, a little past midnight, Sala heard subdued footsteps along the corridor going towards the postern gate where one left the house by the garden. She allowed Caroline a little start, and came upon her unfastening the clumsy lock of the postern.

"Where are you going so late, Caroline?"

"Oh, God in heaven!" exclaimed Caroline, dropping the bundle she carried under her arm.

"You've got a parcel, too," continued Sala,

sternly. "What's in it?"

"Nothing but what belongs to me, Miss Sala," said Caroline, folding her arms across her chest in calm despair. "And now you can wake them all up and tell them you caught me running away."

"But Caroline, dear Caroline, you weren't running away from us — from me, were you?" whim-

pered Sala.

"I was, Miss Sala, I assure you. And there is a man waiting for me outside."

"Oh, I know — I know — Stanislaus Strack is there. Oh, Caroline, out into the night, into strange places, with a strange man — why do you do it?"

"Because I love him," replied Caroline.

Sala shook her head. "I don't understand that. Haven't you any other reason?"

"Because I shall never be happy again without him," said Caroline.

"Ah, that's a different thing. In that case you mustn't stop here. You must go, Caroline. I shall

unfasten the gate for you myself while you tie up your bundle — look, it's become all undone."

"Miss Sala — then you won't betray me?"

gasped Caroline.

"What's the good — if you can't be happy with us any more?" said Sala sadly. "There, be off — good-by — no, not good-by. I shall come and see you at the farm. Hurry, some one may wake and hear you."

"Oh, Miss Sala, Miss Sala, I shall never forget what you've done for me to-night," said Caroline, as she strained the girl to her.

And so Caroline, despite her eight and twenty years, not only found a handsome husband, but even got married with the attendant romance of a midnight elopement.

II

After that, for the next four or five years, the lives of Stanislaus and Caroline ran along a smooth course of domestic routine, each doing the best to prove to the other that they had made a mutual bargain. Caroline, of course, was ostracized by her former co-religionists. Sala was the only one to visit her, and that only rarely and by stealth. Caroline did not mind her isolation. It gave her more time to make her husband's fortune. And indeed, he was the first to admit that it was mainly through her that he was on the way to become a well-to-do man. The narrow strip of oatland with which he had started had broadened

out on every side. In proportion to his possessions grew his ambition, and Caroline saw no reason to discourage his dreams of becoming a great estate owner. It was therefore with natural excitement that he came to her one day and brought the great news that the three acres of wheatland on the north end of the estate, for which his soul had hungered these last two years, were coming into the market, and that at no distant date.

- "Young Krochinsky will sell as soon as he finds a good buyer," ruminated Stanislaus, over his pipe. "His wife is tearing his head off to move into the town—the giddy coquette. Those three acres would round the estate off nicely—wouldn't they, Carlinka? After that they could hardly refuse to make me a magistrate, or even a Rural Councilor."
- "What did you say was the price?" asked Caroline.
- "He will take five thousand florins a lot of money, eh?" he added, as Caroline remained silent.
- "You know all our ready cash must go for the new machinery."
 - "That's so. But we can mortgage the harvest."
 - "We failed to do so two years ago."
- "Ah, but I didn't try very hard. There wasn't the same necessity, you know. Anyhow, to make certain, I shall vow six gilt candles to our St. Ambrosius."
- "And I another three, out of my house-keep money," said Caroline.
- "Then I'll make it a round dozen," said Stanislaus. "I don't think he will resist a round dozen."

The same week, curiously enough, brought Stanislaus another gratifying item of information.

"Who in thunder would have dreamt of this?" he exclaimed, perusing the letter which had arrived by that morning's post. "Just see here, Caroline. You've heard me speak of my nephew Jan, haven't you? Well, this same nephew writes me here black on white, and then I can't believe my eyes, that he has been appointed Excise Commissioner for the Tarnow district and that he'll come and stay with us on the farm for a week or two. Look — doesn't it say so here?"

"Why, certainly it does," corroborated Caroline, smiling at his excitement.

"Who would have thought it?" rattled on Stanislaus. "Little Janko, whom I used to spank for stealing my apples! And now he's coming to assess my orchards and see that I don't defraud the Emperor. I expect he's grown into a fine fellow. He was good-looking enough, the rascal, before he went off to the University at Vienna."

Stanislaus's expectations as to his nephew's personal appearance were fully borne out by facts. Jan turned out a very magnificent young man indeed. His mustache curved with almost geometrical correctness, his waist was positively elegant, and, as he stood up straight in his neat blue uniform with the long gold-hilted dirk at his side, Stanislaus, gaping at him, could not help asking again and again how it was possible that this aristocratic exquisite could be the son of his dumpy, flat-footed sister Lordsha. And Janko smiled complacently.

The two men sat chatting and laughing over their reminiscences for an hour and more. Through some vagary of the railway time-table Janko had arrived at the farm some two hours before he was expected, and Caroline had gone out to make the final purchases for the proper entertainment of the distinguished visitor. At last the door opened, not, however, giving admittance to Caroline but to Sala Unterweiser. The girl took in the presence of the magnificent stranger at a glance, and stopped in confusion.

"Come in — come in, Miss Sala," cried Stanislaus, getting up to welcome her.

"You — you have visitors; I'll come another time," stammered Sala.

"Caroline will be very cross if you won't wait," said Stanislaus kindly.

"No, no, Pan Strack — another time. Good day."

"The devil! A fairy straight out of a story-book!" exclaimed Janko, striding quickly to the window and gazing after the fugitive.

"Yes, but a very solid fairy," laughed Stanislaus; "made of gold, in fact. She comes into fifty thousand florins under her grandmother's will the day she's twenty-one."

Janko, who had been craning his neck to the risk of dislocating it, made a sudden movement to the door.

"Hanged if I don't go and talk to her, Uncle!"
Stanislaus slapped his thigh and laughed uproariously. Now, at last, he recognized the Janko he

had known — wild, impulsive, devil-may-care Janko of the apple days!

Quickly Janko's long legs caught Sala up. She shot him a side-glance of alarm, and redoubled her pace. Janko was in no wise disconcerted.

"Excuse me, mademoiselle," he said, doffing his cap, and bowing the best bow he had learned in the Vienna dancing academy. "I'm afraid I've spoilt your visit to my uncle. Please come back, or I shall never forgive myself. If there's anything I hate it's to cause ladies annoyance. In the families to which I have the *entrée* it is agreed on all hands that my manners are perfect."

"I have no doubt of that," stammered Sala, flushing scarlet. She had equally little doubt that the resplendent young man was poking fun at her.

"Then, please, come back. I shall efface myself as much as possible."

"But I never stay if I don't find Caroline at home."

"Then make this the exception. You see, I am a stranger here," said Janko, trying to strike a note of pathos, "and it's not a happy omen to find people running away at sight of one, is it?"

"Really, sir, you make too much of the matter." Sala was getting very angry with herself. She had just realized that she was drifting into a conversation with an utter stranger.

"In that case, I won't argue. I wish you a very good day, mademoiselle," said Janko, sweeping off his cap more grandly, and bowing lower than before. That abrupt termination always worked

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well. It had in it the magnanimous air of a man who refuses to exhaust the possibilities of an advantageous situation to the dregs.

Stanislaus was still guffawing when Janko returned.

"Found your match, eh, boy? There was a snub for you, if you like."

"Fifty thousand florins, did you say?" asked Janko, absently.

"More. I forgot the accumulated interest."

"Holy Peter! If I had that I should get a post in the ministerial bureau."

"If if's hadn't been invented, the devil wouldn't get a single laugh all the year round," said Stanislaus, thinking ruefully of his own necessities.

Then Caroline came in, and in his preoccupation over his splendid nephew Stanislaus forgot to tell her of the caller she had missed. Janko also refrained from mentioning her, although it was not from forgetfulness. Indeed, his thoughts were very busy with little Sala and, being a poor arithmetician himself, he one day paid a visit to the highest standard of the village school, and, under the pretext of examining them, set the children the sum of fifty thousand florins for seven years at eight per cent. compound interest.

III

But the days passed, and Sala herself was invisible. Janko knew he would probably see her if he went over to Tarnow, but that would

be worse than useless. For he knew well that in the streets of her native city, with all the gossips agog, she would never dare to acknowledge him, much less, of course, stop and talk. His best plan would be to await her next appearance at the farm. So at the farm he remained, delaying his removal to his official residence now on the plea of smoky chimneys and again of dilatory paperhangers. But he could not hoodwink himself as to the fact that the days were growing into weeks, and there was still no sign of Sala. Once or twice he was on the point of taking his aunt Caroline into his confidence, but he held back from an instinctive notion that that was not the wisest thing And then, one fine morning, he felt how to do. utterly absurd all his impatience and plottings and chagrin had been, for there along the hedgerows, leisurely but matter-of-fact, spontaneous as fate itself, came Sala sauntering towards him. could he have doubted that she would come?

He put on a great air of official abstraction until he was close upon her. Then with a laborious effort he affected to recognize her and saluted coldly. Sala lifted a shy but bright and pleasant face to his. Evidently she was inclined to be conciliatory. Janko did not give her time to change her mind.

"Did you get home safely that day?" he asked gravely.

She flushed and smiled. "Oh, I was so rude to you. I've been ashamed of myself ever since. I behaved like a child."

"Well, well," he said soothingly, "you are only that."

"Oh, indeed!" she protested, with a pretty air of offended dignity. "Do you know I was twenty-one yesterday?"

"Twenty-one!" echoed Janko, with an emphasis on the words which was meant strictly for himself.

"We had a big party. I'm taking Caroline some of the cake that was left," and she pointed to the parcel she carried.

"I see; that's why you are in such good humor. You had a great many presents, eh?"

"Everybody was very kind to me," she replied evasively.

"How could they help it?"

"Oh — no compliments, please!"

But whilst apparently remaining obedient to the interdict of compliments, wily Janko still told simple-minded, unsophisticated Sala many things that amused and interested her. And when they parted, nearly an hour later, Sala wondered whether a vague notion of making amends to the handsome young Exciseman had not done as much to bring her to the farm that day as the desire to see Caroline. She also took away with her a tinge of regret that, while expressing an indefinite hope, he had suggested no definite arrangement for their next meeting. But Janko knew that in leaving their next meeting to chance he was laying up for himself a vast store of certainties.

And indeed their fourth encounter was already in the nature of a rendezvous, and from that time forward Janko was rid of the fatigue of prowling about the hedgerow lanes leading to Tarnow. He

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kept comfortably at home, smoked "trabukas" at eight kreuzers apiece, as befitted a man who owned the owner of fifty thousand florins plus the accumulated interest, and made a point of appearing half an hour late at the trysting-place, if only for the fun of seeing Sala's wan, wistful face brighten into a smile as the laggard hove in sight.

Stanislaus' face had of late also appeared haggard and careworn; nor did its gloom melt away at sight of his nephew or any one else. He had many an anxious colloquy with his wife, at the end of which even Caroline's optimism, which she professed in order to cheer her husband, showed signs of considerable wear and tear. At the same time Stanislaus made many journeys, sometimes stopping away a day, sometimes two days, but returning from each trip with looks of more deeply settled discontent. Janko, who went in and out of the house, was of course well aware that the trouble was all about the coveted three acres of land, which had been in the market some weeks now and had already drawn many negotiators, one of whom might snap them up any moment. But he did not interfere with a word, and his air of lordly unconcern was getting on Stanislaus' nerves. And therefore the latter felt a great pang of remorse when Janko met him one evening at the railway station and, with a mien of much anxiety, asked him about the result of his journey.

"No luck at all, my boy, no luck at all," replied Stanislaus as he blew off a deep sigh. "Nobody wants to give a fig for the harvest now that the weevil has got at it up Bohemia way, and may appear here any moment. But even without that, money is very tight everywhere. I've even offered to mortgage the whole farm, but nobody will touch it. And now I shall wake up one morning and find that the land has been whisked away under my very nose."

Janko coughed a little and then said tentatively:

- "Didn't you once tell me that you knew the richest man in Tarnow?"
- "Peretz Unterweiser I know him well enough," was the gloomy reply. "But, of course, since I ran off with Caroline . . ."
- "Well, if not the old man, why not ask his son-inlaw?"
 - "What little Sala married?"
- "No but going to be. Ask his son-in-law. Perhaps he'll do it."
- "You're mad. I don't suppose I've ever set eyes on the man."
 - "Well, look a little closer, Uncle."
 - "What --- you, Janko?"
- "Hush," said Janko, looking round cautiously.

 "I've got her to agree at last. She'll run away, just as your wife did. Her father won't, of course, consent to the marriage. She's willing to hide in the convent and to get baptized, and all that, but she's frightened at the idea of going among all the strange people there. Now if she had somebody to go with her somebody she could trust Aunt Caroline, for instance . . ."
- "But suppose she does?" interrupted Stanislaus, still very much in the dark.
 - "Wait a moment, Uncle. If you help me to the

girl on these lines I'm ready to give you ten per cent. on the total of her dowry—not a bad commission—what do you say? I'll even give it you black on white—business is business, you know, even among brothers—something like this: 'I, Jan Janowski, agree to pay Stanislaus Strack five thousand florins on the day I marry Salomea Unterweiser.' I think you'll get Krochinsky to wait your time on the strength of that I O U. It will depend on you how quickly I am called upon to cash it. Do you think Aunt Caroline will agree?"

"Whether she'll agree!" exclaimed Stanislaus. "Five thousand fiorins for lifting a hair out of the milk — Janko, you young rascal, she'll agree; here's my hand on it."

His exultation was written on his face, and Caroline's heart beat high with joy as she saw him enter the house.

"You've got the money at last?" she hazarded, drawing him quickly into the room.

"I haven't; but you're going to get it for me, Carlinka."

Caroline suppressed a cry of fright, and peered keenly into his face. Then she sighed with relief. He was sane enough — only very, very excited. So, at his request, she quietly sat down and prepared to listen to what he had to tell her. And then out came his tale in a tempestuous rush of words as he measured the room with impetuous strides, his hair dishevelled, his hands gesticulating wildly. The gold fever was fierce in his veins.

"I knew those acres were meant for me all the time," he said, calming down a little at last, "and

if it is posse where when I in yet them. I shall have on them are a present from you. If course, it's unity nations, the passe little work should be intrinseed of the convent. Ton postered I remember you saying when you exme out, were a his taken what's in the emotition and which wides, and all the rest of it. And pastive you member nerves than little Sala. No you we, all woman, it's all in your hands now. And now we'll have a thundering good support on the menagh of it. We've done good business to-day. Carlinka, I tell you, we shall be Burai Courchler you?

IV

Stanislans, despite his abated vehemence, had not noticed that Caroline had refrained from all communit on his suggestion. The rest of the evening passed, and she still did not break her nilence. She simply did not speak because she did not know what first to express - her fear, her anger, or her pain. Sala, little Sala, whose hands had twined round her heart from babyhand, to whom her own childlessness now made her feel more a mother than ever — this same Sala was. us it were, to be made an object of traffic and ngent's commission. Where, Caroline asked herwill despairingly, had been her sense that she had allowed her fluttering dove to entangle herself in the source of this dandified detrimental? For Janko had never imposed upon her. She had put up with him only because she had made it her first rule in life to deal tenderly with her husband's illusions. But that did not excuse her neglect.

The first thing she did was to speak to Janko, and she did not mince her words. But Janko

laughed jauntily.

"My dear aunt," he said, "my public acts belong to the state; my morals I entrust to the mercy of heaven; but in my private affairs I don't wish to be interfered with."

The pitiless words sent Caroline to Sala in a panic. But Sala too did not seem inclined to take the matter tragically.

"Fancy, so you're going to be my aunt!" she cried

gleefully.

"Sala, do you think it's nice of you to run away and — and change your religion?"

The girl stepped back and stared.
"But you did the same, Caroline!"

"The same and yet not the same, Salusha mine. There is a difference. I was a nobody. You are a rich man's daughter, and rich in your own right"—she paused, but Sala did not or would not see the stress on her last words—"and one of these days you may play a great part in the world. And now you want to spoil it all by this hole-and-corner business, this runaway match."

"And this is after your saying that you'd never forget what I did for you," pouted Sala. "When I came upon you that night running away with your Stanislaus I didn't argue with you — did I? — I didn't say this and that to you. You just said you'd be unhappy if you didn't go, and I let you go."

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"Yes, yes, Salusha, that's just why. You helped me to my happiness, and now I'm to help you to your ruin!"

"Ruin?" cried Sala angrily. "How dare you insult my Janko? He's good and true and has sworn a thousand thousand times to love me for ever and ever."

Caroline held her breath, for she was shooting her last bolt.

" And your parents, Salusha?"

For answer Sala plumped down heavily on the grass and broke into a terrible fit of sobbing. Caroline was down beside her in an instant, but Sala thrust her away. She sobbed and sobbed, blurting out in the intervals that Caroline was very cruel to her, that it was heartless to taunt her with forgetting her parents, and that unless she married her Janko she would incontinently die.

Caroline left her, feeling dazed and helpless. She had a vague idea that, terrorized by Sala's passionate waywardness, she had allowed herself to be forced into a promise to do her expected share in the elopement. It was to take place four days after. That would be Friday evening, the one occasion in the week when Leib Silbermann, Tzeeril's father, collected all his clan round his supper table in true old patriarchal fashion. Sala would get herself left at home on the plea of a bad foot—it was a long walk to her grandfather's house. Caroline would come to fetch her when it was quite dark. A little way beyond the town Janko would be waiting with a conveyance and fleet horses, and by midnight they would be safely in the convent.

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V

Mechanically Caroline reiterated to herself the plan of action as she sallied forth from the farm that evening four days later. She had done everything mechanically these last four days. Somehow she had hoped that the power of rational initiative would return to her when the critical But here it was close at hand, and hour came. she was still an automaton. She tried to rouse herself by looking at the bright side of the She recalled the trembling eagerness venture. with which Stanislaus had sped her on her errand and had charged her to remember all that was at stake that evening. That one night's work would save them years and years of struggle and strain. would set them well on the road towards the attainment of their highest hopes. That morning she had found an odd sheet of paper over which was scrawled in her husband's heavy hand: "Rural Councilor Stanislaus Strack."

She had been walking on at her utmost speed, as though by that means she might more easily escape from her own thoughts, when with a sudden start she pulled herself up short and looked about her. What was this? Had she taken the wrong road? No; this was Tarnow right enough, only she had approached it from another direction than the one she had used of old. But that was excusable; it was a great many years since she had last made her way into the town. Why, by this road she would pass old Leib Silbermann's house—she must be quite

close to it now. And all at once, as she turned a corner, a great blaze of light struck upon her eyes, and the squat massive building seemed to spring out of the ground in the darkness.

Caroline came to a halt and looked. Through the fine gauze curtains she could plainly take in the whole room — the long table spread with the Sabbath dishes, and the merry company around it. Leib Kilbermann at the head, with Tzeeril Unterweiser, his eldest daughter, in her dead mother's place on his right hand.

A chill dread at her heart told Caroline of the danger which her watching implied for her. her feet had become lead, she could not stir. old familiar scene, fraught with the magic of its memories, held her and would not let her budge. Eagerly, ravenously as it were, she gazed, for the sight was as food to her famished heart. Now she knew why, despite the fullness of her happiness, one corner of it had remained perpetually empty. would stay for just a few moments, and satisfy the fierce craving of her soul, even though she knew that thus she was laying up for herself a greater hunger during the years to come. Yes, here was her proper place, outcast and obscure, divided from those others by the barriers of her own making. others - she must not defile by contact these men and women who had kept true to the moral of their great destiny, who had held dear their high rank of being the elect of God, and separate among the na-She must not defile them, she who had chosen to merge herself, to become an indistinguishable unit in the mass, when she could have proudly

taken her place among the captains. She had lost her right — her birth-right. And yet, and yet sobbingly she drew a deep breath — perhaps these pain-fraught moments were the coin with which she was to be allowed to buy back her salvation. . . .

Yes, by the finger of God, here was her opportunity. She herself could not go back to them the new life had taken her in too strong a grip. she could compensate for her own renegacy by saving another from turning renegade. She would repair her disloyalty to her people by one redeeming act of disloyalty to her husband. Heaven had other things in its gift than rural councilorships. . . . She looked at Tzeeril's bright unconscious face, the face which had so often puckered with kindly anxiety for her future. No, come what may, that kindly face should not be clouded by an inconsolable sorrow. A jubilant cry broke from her parched lips. Oh, she knew that God would tell her what to do and give her the courage to do it. And she required courage for the deed - but was it not said that Jewish women fought in the ranks of the Maccabees?

Quickly she entered the house, turned the handle and stood, her black-shawled figure boldly outlined against the light, in the open doorway. The merry chatter came to an abrupt stop, giving place to a buzz of surprise. But Caroline only drew herself more erect in the doorway.

"Mistress!" she said, beckoning to Tzeeril, whose eye she had caught immediately.

Tzeeril, with a questioning look at her father, left her place and advanced towards the intruder.

"You are wanted at home, mistress," whispered Caroline.

"She says she has some business with me — I shall be back in a moment," said Treeril in an even voice, which did not reflect the furious throbbing of her heart.

Silently the two women made their way through the streets to the house. Tzeeril said nothing, asked no question; the wasting of a breath might make her too late. In the dark passage Sala stood waiting.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come, Caroline; I was getting so very, very frightened!" she whispered, with a sob of relief.

"Yes, yes, my dove; but you're quite safe now — quite safe," Caroline whispered back.

And with that she turned, and left mother and daughter to settle their own affairs.

Yes, Sala was safe; and now Caroline had time to think of her own safety. But she soon gave up the thought. If she lingered on it too long she would never go home at all. And home she must go — she loved her husband.

Stanislaus received her with an exclamation of astonishment.

"What! Back so soon?" And then he went on flercely. "Did you fail?"

"No, Stanislaus — I did not fail." And with brief words she told him the story of her non-failure.

When he had listened to the end Stanislaus reflected a moment. Then he said hoarsely:

"(lo and stand against the wall."

Caroline obeyed, looking all the while at his right

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fist clenched massively, so massively that it might smash to pulp an ox's head.

She watched his arm swing back to gather force for a heavier blow, and only then her two hands went up in piteous entreaty:

"Oh, husband, husband, don't strike me!"

Something in her tone, something in her look paralyzed the murderous blow. His arm dropped limply to his side. But he lifted his other and pointed to the door.

"Leave my house," he said, and paused to give the coming words the force he had not put into his blow, "you — you double-dealing viper!"

Caroline walked out, but with a smile that could not be prouder had she been a queen making her way out from amid the ruins of her shattered throne.

VI

But Stanislaus' paramount feeling, despite the summary treatment he had meted out to Caroline, was not anger but bewilderment. During the next few days he sat in the kitchen, puffing away at his pipe and brooding on what had and what had not happened. The one thing certain was that he had not yet acquired the Krochinsky acres. He also knew that that being the case it was time he should bring himself back to a philosophic state of mind, and look after what he had. He resumed the rounds of his fields to supervise his laborers. But he did so with clenched teeth, and, much more often than at his men, he gazed at

Krochinsky's notice-board sloping to one side on its support with what seemed a saucily provocative tilt. Still, as long as that notice was up there was yet hope. Something might turn up any day. And something did turn up one day, to wit, the fox-faced estate agent from Cracow; and, by an unlucky chance, Stanislaus must just be looking over as Krochinsky in person lifted down the notice-board and shook hands with the estate agent on the deal. Down like a log went Stanislaus, with the sudden swirl of blood to his heart—he always had been a heavily-breathing man with rather too much color in his face—and a whole week the clever young doctor from Tarnow wrestled for his life.

The doctor won, but he strongly cautioned Stanislaus not to do it again. No excitement, no mental fret, no physical exertion. Stanislaus made up his mind to obey. It was quiet enough in the farmhouse now. Janko, too, had gone. For, being a man with a proper conceit of himself, he had got himself "promoted" some hundred miles away from the scene of his defeat. It was the first redeeming action of his life. The stronger Stanislaus grew the more bored he became. Why had he driven his wife away? No acres and no wifethat was the worst investment he had ever made. Why did she not come back? She might cheat him out of his rural councilorship, but she had no right to cheat him of herself. Well, he would look for her.

He searched in all the most likely places — at the Unterweisers', at the convent. No one knew of her. In heaven's name, where was she? — What was

keeping her? His journeys reminded him of those he had made in quest of the mortgage. But there had not been so much anxiety about them—naturally, because then he had had Caroline to share it with him when he came home. How good it had been to share things with Caroline!

All through the summer and autumn he continued his search, and then he had some warm clothes made for himself to go on with it during the winter. And if he did not find her then, he would sell his farm to make himself a free man, and be at liberty to scour the four corners of the earth for her. he had counted without the bad luck which had taken to dogging his heels. One night there had been a heavy rain, turning the soil into loam, and the next morning Stanislaus came across one of his drivers who was trying to lash his team through a stretch of quagmire, and by his clumsy handling was only succeeding in driving the wheels deeper into the glutinous ruts. With a roar Stanislaus told the man to dismount. He was maining his valuable cattle, and that would mean some hundreds of gulden less to spend on the search for Caroline. In sullen fear the yokel obeyed; they had all learned of late to stand in fear of their master's uncertain moods. But stronger than his anger was Stanislaus' solicitude for the plunging horses. With an oath he sprang forward, gripped one of the hind-wheels with both hands, and with a mighty wrench set the cart going on its way. For a moment or two he stood watching it, with a strange tautness in his attitude, and then, snapping like a reed, he dropped limply to the ground. This time

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the clever young doctor from Tarnow did not indefinitely shrug his shoulders — he decidedly shook his head.

It seemed, however, as if even this time Stanislaus' giant strength would carry him through the danger. Stubbornly he contested every inch of the decline down the dark valley. The doctor marvelled and almost began to hope. But Stanislaus himself had no illusions. He knew it was not his iron strength that kept him alive, but the desire, the hope, nay, the certainty that before his eyes closed in death they would yet once more look upon Caro-There was also one other thought which filled the brief and rare intervals of consciousness that came to him on his sick-bed. There was a certain thing he had to tell Caroline before he died, and he knew he would not be allowed to die before he had confided it to her keeping. And so it was without the faintest tremor of surprise that he woke up one murky November morning and saw her standing by his bedside looking down upon him with agonized eves.

"Oh, husband, husband, I did not know," she moaned, stroking his ashen cheeks. "I only heard it by the merest chance. I had been with my aunt on the frontier, and a peddler from these parts passed through and told me. Oh, but I know I have not come too late, and now you will soon be well and strong again since I have come to look after you."

Stanislaus nodded at her smilingly, with a queer wiseacre look on his face, as he answered her:

"No, no, child, you are not too late — you are

just in time. Listen. When I am dead — it won't be long now . . ."

"Oh, husband!" whispered Caroline.

"I know why all this happened," he went on.
"I thought it all out lying here in my loneliness."

"What have you thought out, Stani?"

"That old God of yours, Caroline, is a very powerful God. He is also a jealous, nay, a niggardly God. For He grudges that even a single one of his sheep should stray away from the fold, as I made you stray."

"No, no, Stani, I came of my own accord."

"You wouldn't have come if I hadn't tempted you. And that is why your God is angry with me and would not let me become a Rural Councilor."

"Oh, don't say that, Stani!"

"But I know that I'm right," he persisted.

"And therefore I must make restitution, or else more punishment will be my lot in the place to which I am going."

"Make restitution?" she echoed wonderingly.

"Give you back to your people, to your God. When I'm dead, Carlinka, go back to them. I know they will receive you gladly. So shall I find peace. So I may even find you in that world where people are not asked in what they believed. Promise me you will go back."

And Caroline promised. Yes, great though her trespass was, and it could not be greater, she need not be afraid now to claim her redemption. She had paid full price for it.

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HAT makes twenty-three copeks," said Uri, gleefully. "Come along, little brother, let's see if we can't sell the whole lot."

Little Yashek set his mouth tight and followed his elder brother bravely to the next house.

"Bull-rushes — fresh bull-rushes from the river — will make your house smell nice for the festival," sang out Uri in his shrill treble.

But it seemed that they had exhausted the commercial possibilities of Ushansk, and though the two little merchants knocked at a great many more doors, three copeks was all they could add to their Little Yashek choked back many a cry. takings. for his foot ached badly where he had cut it on a broken potsherd by the riverside, and his bare soles blistered as they trod the stones burning with the fierce blaze of the afternoon sun. Uri looked at the bundle which yet remained of their stock, and then glanced at his brother's white face, and his heart smote him. But he required his help, for he could not possibly carry the whole load himself, and there could really be no doubt that it was their grandfather who should be his first consideration.

"Well, let's get home now, Yashek," he proposed, after a few more unsuccessful attempts. "We'll

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use the rest ourselves — cut them up and sprinkle them on the floor. Why shouldn't we? After all, we're Jews, too, and why shouldn't our place smell nice like the others? I wonder if he'll be back by now."

In the wretched little dwelling to which they returned they found a hollow-eyed old man sitting wearily on a sack full of nondescript contents.

"Where have you been, you rascals?" he shouted, with affected severity in his mien and voice.

"It was Uri's idea," whimpered Yashek.

"What was?"

"To go down to the river, pull bull-rushes, and sell them in the town," explained Uri, with great equanimity. And then he dived into his pocket and planked the vast store of his wealth on the table. "Look, grandfather — all this."

"You might have fallen in and got drowned."

"We might, but we didn't. Who's going to be so silly and get drowned when there's a holiday coming? And such a splendid holiday as we shall have with all this money."

"I sold four horseshoes. That makes another half a rouble," said old Chayim, a tear glistening in his eye.

Yes, that was it — that was what made his heart so heavy and added to the burden of his years. What was going to become of these two charges of his when the last call came to him? And he knew it was not very far off. He had received several premonitory whispers of it of late. The very enterprise of his two orphaned grandchildren this day had proved to him their utter resourcelessness. It



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was not Pentecost in the land all the year round, and even if it were, the hawking of bull-rushes was not a very stable means of livelihood. He would have to leave them to the mercy of the world — and God help those who required the help of man!

Old Chavim was alone once more in the room. He had despatched Uri to lay in provisions for the festival and Yashek, despite his aching foot, had been unable to resist accompanying him on so pleasurable and exciting an errand. The old man pondered deeply. Of course, once he was gone, the Hekdisch, the communal poorhouse, would have to look after the two children. But his soul revolted at the thought. The Hekdisch was not the place for children. There were influences there which were not good for impressionable young minds. And yet, what else remained? Desperately and in a very panic, the old man delved for counsel in the recesses of his brain. And at last, almost when he had given up hope, a vague idea flickered dimly into shape. A strange idea, and yet the more he thought of it the more it seemed good to him. At any rate, there was no harm in making the attempt. would show these helpless ones a way of helping themselves.

Uri and Yashek were back, looking rather chopfallen and disappointed. The fact was that they and the shopkeepers had somewhat different opinions as to the purchasing powers of a handful of coppers. But old Chayim was not inclined to go into that at the moment. He was too full of the splendid idea that had come to him during their absence.



"Come here, boys," he said.

They sat down near him, astonished at the serious and yet joyful note in his voice.

"Now, listen attentively. What is Pentecost chiefly noted for?"

"Cheese-cakes!" cried Uri and Yashek in a breath.

Old Chayim nodded mournfully. He remembered the cheese-cakes their mother, his dead daughter Malka, used to make. Her memory invested even cheese-cakes with a sanctity of their own.

"Quite right, quite right, children. But that's not exactly what I mean. On Pentecost the Blessed Be-His-Name gave His Holy Law unto Israel."

"Well, surely you didn't need us to tell you that, grandfather, did you?" exclaimed Uri, scornfully. "Every Jew knows that before he is born."

"Now, the Torah, as you know, was made in heaven. But the heaven and the earth, which were created on the first day," continued Chayim, who had never heard of the vagaries of the Higher Criticism, or if he had would have laughed them incontinently to scorn, "the earth and the heaven, I say, are separated by a thick, impenetrable wall. That being so, you will ask — How did the blessed Torah get from heaven to earth? And the Kabbalah tells us how — I forget the place where it tells us. But it says that on the night before the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, that is, on the night before Pentecost, the heavens opened, and through the aperture the Law was passed down from above in



readiness for Moses to give to the children of Israel on the morrow."

"The heavens opened?" echoed Uri, skeptically.

"Disheliever — heretic!" cried old Chayim, hotly. "Didn't I tell you that it says so in the Kabbalah? So listen and don't interrupt. Now, the Torah is obviously the most precious thing which mankind possesses, and which the whole world since its creation has been waiting and longing for. And, therefore, in commemoration of the heavens having opened that wonderful night before Sinai, they have opened ever since, just for the fraction of a minute, on every night before Pentecost, and every one who happens to catch sight of the Garden of Eden and the glories beyond at that moment is granted any wish — even the boldest — which he may have in his heart."

"Why — why did you never tell us this before, grandfather?" asked Uri, reproachfully.

"Because, my dear child," was the tremulous answer, "there had never been any necessity for it."

"And what's the necessity now?" persisted Uri.

"You are the necessity — you and your brother. Listen, dear children. I may be taken from you any minute, and you are too young yet to be your own mainstay in the world. Now, this is what I want you to do. Keep awake this night. Watch the heavens, and when you see them open you must wish — wish that, when I am gone, God should send you some one to shield you and provide for you even as your father would have done had he lived, yes," —his voice rose with denunciatory fierceness —

"even as your father, whom wantonly murderous hands slew and left to rot in the trackless wilds, so that no trace of him has ever come to light. Now, children, will you do as I tell you? Your eyes are young and strong, mine are old and tired. They are making ready for the long sleep. So yours is the watching, children, yours."

"We shall watch, grandfather," said Uri, sturdily, while Yashek gulped down a sob or two. He was a little frightened. Those were strange and awesome words which grandfather had uttered.

The momentousness of the impending issue seemed to cast a shadow over the little household. When the time came for evening service old Chayim started off for the synagogue. But he had only gone a few steps when he turned back. He was not equal to-day to the distance. As to spending the night at the House of Prayer, his usual custom before Pentecost, that was quite out of the question. They had their frugal supper early, so that Uri and Yashek might commence their vigil in good time. arranged that they should make their look-out from the room at the back, where there were no houses to block their view and where the skies stretched free and unbounded across the open fields. It was just as well to give God every chance of working His miracle.

The sunset was fading away. Across the distance floated the eerie melody of a shepherd's reedpipe as he drove his flock home. Uri and Yashek sat by the window silent under the thrall of the silent landscape. From the other room came the monotonous drone of old Chayim muttering the fes-

tival psalms. Quicker and thicker descended the shadows. One by one the thousand voices of the fields grew hushed — the myriad night-hymn of nature dwindled away note by note. From the river, where early that morning they had gathered their bull-rushes, the chorus of hoarse croakings came fainter and fainter until it ceased altogether on the darkness.

"The frogs have gone to sleep," whispered Yashek.

"Well, perhaps you're sorry that you're not a frog," replied Uri, fiercely.

"The sky is very dark," said Yashek again,

presently.

"God does it purposely, so that we can see the brightness better when it comes," Uri explained to him. But he made no remonstrance when he felt his little brother's hand creep tremblingly into his own.

And so they sat and watched with straining eyes. As though in pity for their loneliness a few stars came out after a while to keep them company. Every now and then Chayim shuffled into the room and stood there for a moment or two, uttering no word so as not to distract their attention. But he did not add to the children's reassurance. He had suddenly become to them a ghostly and disembodied presence, part and parcel, as it were, of the mysteries he had set them to explore that night.

To keep his thoughts from the gaunt old figure Uri busily rehearsed to himself the wording of the wish of which he was seeking fulfillment. Never

THE CLOVEN HEAVENS

before had he been so struck by the desirability of having a father of his own. He scarcely recollected the one of whom he had been so cruelly robbed years ago. But he compared his lot with that of Baruch, Lemech, Tobias, and sundry other acquaintances of his. It was a bad thing never to be asked a question in the Talmud class though you were bursting with eagerness to display your knowledge. It was worse never to be allowed a sip at the cup of raisin wine after the Kiddush on Friday nights in the synagogue. Ah! Such luxuries were only for the boys who had a real live father to defend their claims.

But, after all, it was not so much for himself he cared. He was nearly a man — in two years' time he would be Barmitzvah and able to fight his own battles. His heart went out in compassion for peeky little Yashek with the sad, wondering eyes. There were many things he himself did not understand, but Yashek understood less. Yashek seemed always to be wanting to ask questions — among them, no doubt, how it felt to have enough to eat and to have shoes to wear. Uri reflected whether it would not be advisable to alter his wish. Perhaps it was too much to ask God to send a father for the two of them. Perhaps he ought to suggest a compromise and ask God to take him and give Yashek a father instead.

So his thoughts ran on as the heavy hours dragged by.

- "Do you see anything, Uri?" whimpered Yashek, at intervals.
 - "No be quiet!" said Uri, roughly, so as not to

betray the sickening sense of failure that was coming over him.

Oh, it was quiet enough by now. The more they watched the more irresponsive and adamantine wented to become the solid impenetrable vault overhead. Their lids ached with the fixed intensity of their gaze. Uri's eyes felt as if they had turned into a drill with which to bore a hole in the skies. And then, suddenly, with a scream of terror. Yashek buddled up close to him. The silence had been broken by a clap of thunder. Was the great revelation coming at last?

But, no, it was no clap of thunder. It was just a loud knocking at the outer door. And the next instant they caught the sound of a man's voice from outside:

"Does Reb Chayim, the peddler, live here?"

There was a short interval, and they heard Chayim cautiously approaching the door.

"Who is there?" he quavered.

"A stranger who asks shelter for the night."

"You come late, friend."

"I come from a great distance," explained the voice. "I arrived at Tomir railway station just before the commencement of the festival and had to make my way here on foot. I mean you no harm, Reb Chavim."

The old man was plainly hesitating, and then he resolutely flung open the door.

"Enter in God's name. I have no bed for you to sleep on, and very little refreshment, but what hospltality my poor dwelling has to offer you, to that you are welcome."

THE CLOVEN HEAVENS

The stranger entered the room with heavy steps.

"Sit down, my son," said the old man.

A sob broke from the stranger.

"Reb Chayim, Reb Chayim!" he cried. "Don't you know me?"

For a second or two Chayim peered at him closely in the murky light of the solitary tallow candle, and then tottered back with a groan.

"God in heaven, am I dead already that the dead come to have speech with me?"

"Reb Chayim, but I'm not dead," said the stranger, eagerly. "I'm not dead, I never was dead, I, Peretz, your daughter's husband."

"Great is God, and His word is truth," mumbled Chayim.

"And his mercy endureth forever," added the visitor, piously. "Listen, Reb Chayim, and let me tell you what happened. That terrible night—"

"Yes, that terrible night," echoed Chayim, nodding vaguely.

"When the fury of the mob was let loose upon us, when our homes were laid in ashes, and the murderous knives slashed at us in our mad flight—"

He broke off and, cowering down, covered his face with his hands. Chayim looked at him in silence.

"No, no, let me be calm and tell you everything in orderly fashion," resumed the visitor. "We had got as far as the edge of the forest, that is myself and Malka and the two children — carried along in the crowd of the other fugitives — when the murderers came up with us. I heard poor Malka give a great gasp as a knife clove her to the heart, and

then I seized the children, but in the wild stampede they were torn from my grasp, trampled under foot, and as I stooped to pick them up, a heavy club swung down on my head—a great flash of fire seemed to blaze up in my brain, shrivelling it to cinders, and then I lost count of everything. All I knew was that I ran, but I did not know why I was running. And then, after a long while—"

"Yes, after a long while?" prompted Chayim.

"I woke up and found myself in a hospital. Somehow I had managed to get across the frontier into Prussia. There I had been cared for and cured, in body but not in mind. Some fearful injury had been done to my brain. My memory was gone. The past was blotted out. I did not even remember my own name. And then kindly friends helped me to go across to the great land beyond the seas — a journey of eight days by water. And there I started a new life, and God was good to me, and I prospered. I knew faces and names that I dealt with in my daily life, but the past remained blotted out — a blank page."

"Blotted out — a blank page," echoed Chayim,

parrot-like.

"Until, years after, I met a man who had known me in my home here, and he came and spoke to me, and as in a flash the veil was lifted, and I saw clearly again, and remembered — all things. And so, Reb Chayim, I came."

"I see that you have come," said Chayim, vaguely.

"I knew I should tear open all the old wounds," continued the visitor, "Malka, the children, all dead — dead. But I remembered you. I thought

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that you, perhaps, were living still, dragging out a lonely old age, friendless, perhaps depending on the charity of strangers. But, Reb Chayim, you shall want no longer. Father, come with me, for the sake of your daughter, my dead wife, my dead children—"

A queer smile illuminated Chayim's wizened features.

"Peretz, the heavens have opened," he said, quietly.

"Reb Chayim, I don't understand."

"They have opened for you, my son. No, don't fear, my mind is not wandering. You have come a journey eight days by water to see me, to comfort my old age. Such righteousness as yours God does not let go without reward. He has been saving it up for you." He pointed to the other room. "Look and you will find it in there — your children, not dead, but living."

For a moment the other stood petrified. Then with unsteady step he walked into the room where the two little figures crouched by the window, and, with a broken cry, he gently placed a strong arm round the neck of each.

- "Children mine Uri, Yashek what are you doing here in the dark?" he cried, between laughter and sobs.
- "Waiting for you, father but you must have come another way," said Uri.
 - "What other way?"
 - " Not the one from heaven."
- "There is a time when earth and heaven are one," cried Peretz, straining them to him again and again.

And then he took them each by the hand and led them back into the other room.

"We must not be selfish, children. Let us give your grandfather a share of our joy," he said. "Reb Chayim!" he called.

Chayim's head was resting on the table, and he did not raise it at the summons. He never raised it again. He had played his part. He had carried the burden uncomplainingly, and he had laid it down as soon as he knew that there were stronger arms than his ready to take it up. Which is the way of a man who knows his time and place.

A week later Peretz and his two boys stood on board the great liner, America-bound. Uri, fatigued by the train-journey, was already fast asleep in his berth, but little Yashek had begged hard to be allowed to stay on deck, though the vast water spaces were long wrapt in the pall of night. With fixed gaze he was staring up at the glittering skies.

"What are you looking for, my son?" asked his father, smiling.

- "For the joining in the heavens," replied Yashek.
- "What joining?"
- "Where they opened that night and closed up again."
 - "But they did not open. I came the other way."
- "They must have opened," persisted Yashek, "or else how did grandfather's soul get through into the Garden of Eden?"

And his father had to admit that that was one of the questions of which the proverb says that a fool may cast a stone into a well and a hundred wise men will vainly try to fish it out again.

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GOD'S BALANCE

Ι

EAR in, year out, Sholem Knass had stood in that doorway selling his apples. was a forlorn, desolate look about him, but to say that Sholem Knass was alone in the world would have been an untruth. He had a stray cousin or two, a whilom sister-in-law of his had just married her third husband, and it was even rumored that a surviving brother was a respected inmate of the Lemberg lunatic asylum. He also had some intimate friends, whom he went to see frequently. They were his wife and two children, whom he had lodged in the Everlasting House some twenty years ago, when the great epidemic decimated the town. It is a great comfort to be able to visit friends whom you are always sure to find at home.

Sholem had not always stood in that doorway. The earlier and sturdier days of his mercantile career had been spent in the market-place. But, gradually, as he grew older he could not hold his own against the hustling, screeching fish-wives, who were constantly bidding him to get out of their way, and upsetting his store, to wit, the wicker basket that held his wares. So being by nature and habit of a peaceful disposition, he had cleared the field

and had migrated to this side-street, where customers were few and far between, but where, at least, you knew one minute where you would be the next.

At first he had had to cut things rather fine, but after a while he had nursed up a sort of regular clientèle, from which he drew enough to suffice for his needs, with just a kreuzer over every now and It would seem that Sholem might have made a much better living if he had been just simply a beggar by trade. But woe betide any one who implied that he was only buying of him for charity's sake, or who refused to take the proper amount of goods in exchange! Before he had gone a vard he would probably have found Sholem's apples whizzing round his ears. And as Sholem's apples were either very hard and crabby, or very soft, through having been kept too long in stock, people found it more expedient to take their purchase away with them in the regulation paper bag.

Knowing that Sholem was a man of principle, it will not surprise any one to hear that he was also a man of ambition. And it was for the realization of that ambition that he was saving up those occasional surplus kreuzers. What did he intend doing with them? Buy a house, a horse and cart, or, perhaps, an elaborate suit of burial clothes? No, his hoardings had a more practical and feasible object. The dream of his life, in short, was the acquisition of a proper brass pair of scales. The one he was using now was a very ramshackle affair, which he himself had constructed with some pieces of wood, some pieces of string, and a few old bits of wire. That had to serve his purpose, but he was



constantly tormented by the thought that perhaps he was giving his customers short weight, which was doing them an injustice. And, again, it struck him that perhaps he was giving them overweight, which was doing an injustice to himself.

And having once made up his mind to get a good pair of scales, it was, of course, from that but a short step to the determination to get the best there was to be had. Often he had feasted his eyes on the magnificent specimens exhibited in Eigeles', the iron-monger's, window, and he had set his heart on one in particular, the shape and structure of which, whether by accident or design, suggested a "Shield of David." But the price of it was six gulden seventy-five, and Eigeles would not abate a kreuzer. Eigeles was not a hard-hearted man, but keeping to his price was, perhaps, only his way of showing that he did not approve of a poor man like Sholem Knass buying such an expensive article.

However, despite Eigeles' objections, Sholem's kreuzers accumulated and became gulden. And the gulden, with the additional coins, at last became the brass pair of scales with the "Shield of David." And Sholem Knass became the proudest and happiest man in Galicia. It was one evening that preceded the Eve of Yom Kippur that the blessed consummation was achieved. To convince himself of the fact, finally and definitely, he at once went and made a present of his old string-and-wire scales to the crippled woman, his competitor in trade, who lived a garret or two away from him, whose own pair of scales had been stolen from her some years ago, and who since had to depend on the more or

less grudging loans of a substitute by more or less good-natured neighbors. Stolen! Fancy having your pair of scales stolen, especially when they were worth keeping! Sholem laughed as he sat revelling in the sight and touch of his own treasure. As likely any one would have a chance of running away with the coffin of King Jan Sobietsky in the Stanislaus Cathedral up the hill. Hour after hour he sat, toying, experimenting with it, noting with delight the quick response of the beam, the delicate quiver of the tongue as he tried it with various His ears drank in the musical tinkle of the two salvers impinging against each other, and when he had tired of these joys he took the machine to pieces and polished the composite parts till they shone like a strange amalgam of silver and gold.

And meantime, his brain was busy with great Such a pair of scales wanted living up Were they not rather too good for mere apples? Possibly with a little luck and the blessing of God he might succeed in scraping together another fund to set up a grocery shop, where he might stand behind the counter weighing out sugar and coffee and dried prunes with these resplendent scales of his. . . . He looked up, and, with a start, saw the roseate dawn flushing the East. Heavens, he had quite unconsciously, of course, been awake all through the night, and now it was morning, and nearly time for service, and this was the last of the Ten Penitence Days, when there was so much praying to be done, preparatory to the Day of Judgment on the morrow. And more especially, there were thanks to be returned to God for having vouchsafed

him this pair of scales. And Sholem hurried out to the synagogue with the same feeling of uplifted devotion with which, say, King Solomon went forth to the dedication of his great temple.

II

Now, of course, every one expects that when Sholem returned to his garret he would find his pair of scales gone. But it was not so. That happened only — but one must not anticipate. Sholem came back, partook of a hurried and frugal breakfast, snatched up his basket of stock and his precious pair of scales, which awaited him securely enough on his return, and set out to take his stand in the accustomed doorway. seemed to him an auspicious sign that the first individual who passed him was Benish Yosselmann, whom fortune seemed to have selected for the bestowal of her choicest gifts. The son of a rich man himself, he was to marry soon after Tabernacles the beautiful daughter of a still richer man. dowry had been fixed at ten thousand gulden, which had already been deposited, in gold,—all the town knew it for a fact — with the Rabbi. As Benish rustled by in his great silken caftan, on his head the barrette of fur with the six beaver tails that had been his father-in-law's betrothal present to him, he caught sight of Sholem's pair of scales and stopped. a joke or gibe on his tongue. Sholem drew himself up stiffly and looked him straight between the eyes, and the handsome young bridegroom turned and hurried on, a blush of confusion on his face, and the attempted gibe forced back into his throat. Sholem looked after him and chuckled. Benish Yosselmann represented to him the might and magnitude of the world against which he had been waging his life-long struggle, the same world to which he was now throwing out a defiant challenge, and which he was about to fight with new weapons, to wit, these shining scales of his. And so far, he had decidedly had the best of it.

But the hours passed on, and he was not doing well at all; in fact, trade was very slack. did not mind in the least; if anything, he preferred A bad beginning always meant a good ending. Besides, this was really an off-day. Most people had already made their purchases the night before. Sholem himself did not intend staying beyond one o'clock, so as to be in time for the afternoon prayer, and to get himself ready for the ensuing Fast. Only - well, yes, it was rather tedious to wait about with scarcely a customer coming up to you, and your hand itching all the time to use those wonderful scales. Sholem moved a little further back into the doorway — the morning sun was beating on him rather fiercely — and sat down at the foot of the staircase, a thing he but seldom did. his head leant against the wall. He had forgotten that he had kept vigil all through the preceding night, and nature reminded him of it. Not only reminded him, but insisted on his making good the deficit of slumber. Sholem slept.

Slept, and whom, a few minutes later, should Satan send along but Moshke Peeyak, to wit, Moshke

Drunkard, on his morning prowl? His bleared eye took in the situation at a glance. Sholem asleep, the unprotected basket of apples at the world's mercy, and — what was this? Not every minute of the day did one see such a beautiful pair of scales lying promiscuously about the streets. No. it should not be said that Moshke Peeyak had no appreciation for the beautiful. Everything that seemed cast-off and neglected by other people should find a refuge with Moshke Peeyak - everything that was good and serviceable, and whereon the pawnbroker would make any advance whatsoever. And so Moshke took possession of the scales with all the despatch, the delicacy of handling, and the lack of ostentation with which he usually in his sober moments acquired the means which had enabled him to earn his sobriquet. And by the time when in due course Sholem Knass woke up and rubbed his eyes and spat out three times, to rid himself of the evil dream he thought obsessed him, yes, by this time his scales were no longer scales, but had transformed themselves back into their original gulden. which gulden again had, in part, transformed themselves into the flery stream which was trickling comfortably down Moshke Peeyak's insatiable gullet.

III

It can be easily understood that the disappearance of his scales gave Sholem Knass food for much reflection. So far as his tottering wits were able to arrive at an idea on the subject, there

were three points which demanded his attention. In the first place, how was he to carry on his business now that he had no scales with which to weigh That consideration, however, he soon his apples? dismissed. It was impious to allow a question of sordid materialism to interfere with the devotional spirit of Holy-day time. Why trouble what would happen after Yom-tov? Let God see to that. the second place. Sholem asked himself for what degree of sin it would be accounted to him that he had unconscionably fallen asleep, and so had put temptation into the path of a fellow-creature to commit a theft so close in the neighborhood of the But the third and greatest Day of Atonement. question of all was - who was the thief?

Sholem went through the catalogue of all the notoriously bad characters of the place, not omitting, of course, Moshke Peeyak, but without letting greater suspicion rest on him than on any other. In fact, he rather favored the supposition that Todderes, the besom-binder, was the malefactor. deres had once frightened Sholem away from his basket by raising a cry of "mad dog," and had in his absence helped himself liberally to its contents. However, it was essential that one should find out who the thief really was. To prosecute him and, put him in prison? Oh, no — the thought never entered Sholem's head. He only wanted to know his name, so that he might make a special appeal to heaven on his behalf that the trespass should be forgiven. The intervention of the injured party himself ought surely to count for something in the case. Of course, Sholem might have made his appeal without specifying anybody in particular. But that he could not do; his mind was not strong enough to tackle the abstract. And, besides, he might allow his suspicion to dwell accidentally on one whose hands were clean of the crime, and so be guilty of the much greater offense of impugning an innocent man — no, no, that would never do! And, therefore, in heaven's name, who was really the thief?

The golden autumn day, the one following the theft, was drawing rapidly to its close. Deeper and thicker the shadows crept into the corners of the tumble-down little prayer-house, where Sholem was worshiping this Day of Atonement, this great White Fast, whereon all things human were weighed in God's scales, to see how much they still fell short of the divine. The Gentile factotum had already lit the three-armed candelabrum on the Reader's desk. and was dotting the spaces before and behind with guttering tallow-twists. They lit up the pale, hardset faces of the men, to whom this narrow Bethel had been a broad battlefield on which they had all, each to the best of his endurance, been waging fierce warfare against their evil destiny.

Sholem, far back in the odd nook which was all that could be spared for him, as one who paid no scot or lot to the congregation, had fought as hard as any of them. All the live-long day he had been up on his feet, wrapped in his heavy praying-shawl, oblivious of the heat, of the fetid dankness of the loam on which he stood, for last winter some one had taken away the two endmost planks, for fuel, presumably, and they had not been replaced. And,

suddenly, about the middle of the Conclusion Service, he did something which was contrary to his usual practice, and could not even be justified by any reason of ritual. He sank down upon the floor and remained there.

Nobody noticed it — they were all too busy with themselves. Sholem himself did not seem to notice it either. He was conscious only of a sort of paradoxical feeling that, prone though he lay, he was being lifted up, higher and higher, and still higher, into immeasurable altitudes. And then, all at once, he came to a stop.

Before him loomed an immense black pall, diaphanously solid and luminously impenetrable. A strange curtain — he had never seen, or imagined anything like it before. And the other side of it seemed more incomprehensible still. From behind it there came to him curious sounds and silences — only one could not tell which was sound and which was silence. At times he thought there was great stirring and whirring as of wings, and every now and then there came to his ears a faint musical tinkle, which he fancied he had heard before.

And, presently, he gathered certain words, which were not articulate of the lips, but which yet seemed to thunder through infinity. Some one spoke of a great emperor, of mighty armaments on land and sea, that were to keep in equilibrium the world's peace, and were to guarantee and safeguard the welfare of the peoples. And just then there was again that musical tinkle which sounded so familiar to Sholem's ears, and then the voice went on to speak of self-aggrandizement, of human vain-glory, of the

mercy of the sword, and the misery of millions. Sholem listened tense and alert, for he guessed that this was but the beginning of a wondrous prodigy he was to witness. His surmise was cor-There was a moment's interval, and then another name rang out through space. huddled into himself in affrighted awe, for it was the name of one who throughout that part of the world stood for righteousness and the cult of good, of a man revered by all as learned in the Law, a wise head and a golden heart in whose likeness mothers praved God to fashion their children. That was the repute of the man, and yet, when the voice spoke again, it spoke of veiled ironies and hidden hypocrisies, of misdeeds done in secret and masked beneath the veil of specious godliness. And again Sholem heard the tinkle that sounded more and more familiar each time.

And after that there was a long succession of other names, each with its counterpoise of good and evil. And after, as it seemed to Sholem, the name of every living human thing had been gone through, there was a longer pause than usual, and Sholem felt his heart stop, for he knew that something more momentous still was about to betide. In accents soft with loving-kindness, such as one might use to a little child, and yet resonant as though with the fanfare of a thousand trumpets of triumph, the voice spoke again:

"Sholem Knass!" was the name it called.

And at the sound the luminously impenetrable pall was rent asunder, and through the gaping orifice Sholem saw — saw, held up by an invisible

hand — his own pair of scales! A cry broke from him that mingled in it fear and joy and an overmastering pride. Ave, was it not something to be proud of? That was the meaning of it all — that was how his scales had disappeared. God had taken them from him, had taken them to weigh therein the destinies of mighty priests and potentates and all the creatures that walked the earth on this great Day of Judgment — God himself. . . .

IV

People wondered what might be the surpassing excellence by which poor lowly Sholem Knass had deserved the crowning reward of breathing his last on the Day of Atonement. How hard he must have prayed for it! But they were quite wrong. lem Knass had not meant to die at all. simply gone to heaven to ask God for the return of his precious pair of scales, and God had not allowed him to go back.

THE NAMELESS GRAVE

I

HE lecture auditorium at the Government Hospital in Charkov was crowded to its fullest capacity, as was usual when Professor Koralnicheff was holding forth. Small in stature, but great in standing, mercurial, theatrical almost in his manner, the famous surgeon kept his class hanging spellbound on his every word. His listeners included not only students, but even men who had already achieved individual renown. One was never too great to learn from Professor Koralnicheff.

And therefore a buzz of irritation ran through the hall when one of the attendants noiselessly opened the door and deferentially tip-toed up to the professorial chair. The lecturer, engrossed in his theme no less than his class, waved him back impatiently, but the man would not be denied.

- "I must speak to your Excellency," he whispered.
- "Quick, then what is it?"
- "Your Excellency, a telephone message has just come through a railway accident the Poltava express derailed a mile outside the town many injured," said the man, tumbling the phrases out breathlessly.

"Ah, that's different," said the professor, a light of battle leaping in his eyes, of battle with his lifelong enemy, Death. "Gentlemen, the session is suspended. Are the motor ambulances ready?"

"Waiting, your Excellency," replied the attend-

ant.

"I shall want the whole staff to accompany me. Hermanson!"

A tall, slim man, still young, with keen eyes, his pale ascetic face framed in a black, well-trimmed beard, stepped forward and stood at attention.

"You will stay behind to superintend everything for our return, Hermanson. Operating tables, nurses. . . ."

"Certainly. As it happens, your Excellency, I am the house surgeon on duty."

"Ah, that's good. I know you are reliable."

The other man acknowledged the compliment with a bow.

The motor ambulances had thundered away on their errand of mercy, and a deep silence fell over the great building, an ominous, tense silence, as if the walls breathed suspense at the human ruin that was soon to invade them. Hermanson, surrounded by the lower-grade personnel, moved about his task with a coldly methodical air which made one think of the unerring accuracy of a skillfully constructed automaton.

His quick, calculating eye took in every detail at a glance. His sure hand picked out instruments and anesthetics with the fastidiousness of an artist selecting his pigments. It was this quick eye, this infallible hand which had set Dr. Hermanson high at an age when others were still painfully struggling to get their foot on the first rung of the ladder. A hard brilliance seemed to emanate from the man, expressive of nerves and muscles of steel. Nobody had penetrated the aloofness which enveloped him like a cuirass. But then he wished nobody to penetrate it. He had his reasons.

He gave a last look round and then slowly made his way to the commodious combined-room that housed him night and day during his monthly spell of duty. There he sat down and waited. He took up a French novel and then immediately tossed it aside again. With a weary gesture he threw himself back in his chair and closed his eyes. His features softened, as if he had taken off the iron mask which habitually cloaked them. The real man behind seemed to struggle forth. It was a man fretted and spent with secret torment who stood revealed.

Masks — masks — the word was in season. This was the day of masks. He had walked through the Jewish quarter of the town and had met many people wearing poke-faces and various other disgnises. For this was the great Jewish Carnival, the Feast of Purim, to commemorate the far-off day, when lots were cast in the city of Shushan whether the race from which he had sprung should be wiped off the face of the earth.

This day was memorable to him for many things. The hero of it had given him his original name, though it was many years now since Mordecai Hershson had been "decently" christianized into Maurice Hermanson. The anniversary, fraught for his erstwhile co-religionists with the national joy of

their miraculous deliverance, only served for him to draw up the curtain on the personal tragedy of a life-long remorse. It was on this day on which he had lost his father, lost him for this life and the life eternal.

And so, whenever this day came round on the wheel of the calendar, he allowed himself the luxury of confronting his naked soul. It was a luxury that filled his heart with the bitterness of Dead Sea fruit and ashes. Yes, one day in the year he set aside for traveling back, to the exclusion of all other lines of thought, along the dismal road that stretched back to the past. All the rest of the year he belonged to the world—on this one day he belonged to himself. But no one must guess what this sub-division of his inward self cost him. It was for this that his face wore its iron mask.

His eyes were still closed, shutting out all but the picture that passed before his mental vision. He saw himself again as a boy of fourteen, maybe fifteen. He re-lived the wretched vagabondage of those early years, the miserable round with the sadeyed, asthmatic peddler, his father, through poverty-stricken villages where they stood chaffering for hours over a copeck with tattered housewives, to a chorus of squalling children and yelping dogs. They had no home of their own — it had been broken up when his mother quitted their poor little hovel for the silent grandeurs of the Everlasting House.

And Mordecai had trudged along by the side of his taciturn father, hunger and cold nipping at his vitals, rebellion gnawing at his heart. The boy had carried the bundle of wares, none too heavy even for one of his tender age, while his father had carried the heavier load. Eli Hershson would trust it to no one else, this treasure of his, the one thing that made even such a life as his worth living. In a knapsack, slung across his shoulder, reposed his library, the precious volumes in which was enshrined the wisdom of the sages of Israel. They were all there, those wonderful works — the Talmud commentaries, "The Spread Table," "The Duties of the Heart," and last, but not least, "The Guide of the Perplexed."

It was this which chiefly filled the boy's heart with its secret sullenness of revolt. At night it was their practice to call at some wretched wayside inn, to sleep on a shake-down of foul-smelling straw in a wilderness of creeping and scurrying things. But before that, out came those cruel books, and by the light of a guttering tallow-stump the two sat wading through the intricacies of the difficult text, the boy aching with fatigue, mechanically echoing the instruction of his father, every now and then roused into wakefulness by an admonishing blow from the latter's clenched hand.

Oh, how Mordecai hated those merciless books! And if he hated one more than the others, it was this so-called "Guide of the Perplexed," if only for the irony of its title. Would it ever lead him out of this bewildering labyrinth of aimless wanderings and hungerful days? Would it ever point him the way to the joy of life, to the laughter and sunlight of a happier destiny?

And then, suddenly and without warning, had come the end. It was the afternoon of the Fast

of Esther. All day they had been fighting their way through a blinding hurricane of snow, across the frozen morass, on to the nearest town where Eli Hershson knew there was a synagogue.

"Father, I can't go another step!" groaned Mordecai for the fiftieth time.

"You can't? Am I to miss through you hearing the Megillah read, for the first time in my life? Up with you, lazybones!"

The evening shadows fell darker and darker, the blizzard blew more blindingly, and at last Eli came to a halt with a sob.

"You are right, Mordecai. It's no use. We have lost our way."

"What, despite the 'Guide of the Perplexed'?" The sneer flashed through Mordecai's swooning brain.

In the distance glimmered the light of a "kretchma," and a quarter of an hour later they stepped into the dingy parlor filled with a noisy crew of roystering mujiks. One of them, a huge, blear-eyed fellow, caught Eli by the shoulder.

"We want vodka, Jew — give us money for vodka!" he bawled.

"Money?" said Eli, trembling. "I have none."

"What? To-day you have hanged Haman on a tree and divided his spoils between you, and you say you have no money?"

And in his drunken fury he whipped out a knife, and Eli went down, struck to the heart.

"Run, Mord'ky — run for your life!" he gasped with his last dying breath. And Mordecai ran. And yet, as he stumbled on wildly through the

darkness, his chest torn with heaving sobs, the thing that was uppermost in his mind was not the glimpse of his father's death-drawn face, but the thought that that night he would not have to sit up with aching eyelids over the "Guide of the Perplexed." His heart seemed to soar heaven-high with a wonderful sense of release, of liberty. He would be able to go to sleep when he liked — oh, to sleep, only to sleep!

And when at last he awoke again from the deathlike slumber that had enveloped him, he saw a bearded priest stooping over his bed.

"You shall stay with me," said the priest.

Mordecai stayed. The priest was very good to him. He gave him everything his heart desired and only took from him one little thing — the faith of his fathers. And since then outcast little Mordecai had become a great man and a great doctor, and the world was at his feet.

And that brought him to the present. He knew that almost with the moment of his transgression his penance had begun. Even the baptismal waters had not been able to wash his soul clear of its sense of guilt! More and more clearly he had seen the scheme of his punishment. The higher he had ascended the more heavily the millstone of his remorse had dragged at his heart. He had succeeded quickly, so that the sooner there might be nothing left for him to achieve, and he would stand amid his conquered world, tortured with the emptiness of satiety. No doubt, too, that was why fate had lately given him her crowning gift, the young and beautiful woman, daughter of a rich and powerful father,

the woman who was soon to share and double his triumphs. No, there was nothing left for him to conquer. . . .

Nothing more than the haunting self-reproach which would pursue him to the end of his days. Never would he be able to battle down his own horror of the selfish, craven fear which had driven him to desert his father in his death agony. He had left him behind, as one leaves carrion that has fallen by the way, to be thrust into a nameless, unhallowed grave by dishonoring hands, without the sanctifying rites one would not deny even to one's mortal enemy. And this had been his father, his very own father, who had given him life!

And so this silent, ironic retribution would go on, growing in force with the increase of the years. As it had been his sin, so it would be his punishment—never to stand by the side of that uncharted grave, to stand with bowed head and clasped hands, asking for the pardon which alone would bring him peace. Never would he be able to find his way back across trackless time and space, a fit reprisal on one who had spurned the "Guide of the Perplexed." His life would outwardly follow its appointed course, but his disembodied self would go wandering aimlessly, restlessly, searching through the infinities for the soul of him he had wronged....

II

His eyes were clear, his movements brisk and alert. No one would have guessed that he was going through his work in a dream-like haze. He

had scarcely had time to get back to his workaday mood when the ambulances returned with their pain-stricken burdens. Rapidly the casualty wards filled with the swathed, groaning figures, Hermanson moving through it all, calm, systematic, self-reliant, bringing order out of chaos by a word, a directing look.

"Short of beds," he said to one of the nurses.
"How many more?"

"Just one, doctor. But," she shrugged negligently, "it doesn't much matter about him. He can go to the fever ward."

"Come, let me have a look at him."

The waiting stretcher had been deposited in the corridor. Hermanson shot a swift look at the occupant, a grizzled, elderly man, and understood the meaning of the nurse's disdainful manner. His brows contracted in a frown, his mind moved rapidly. Then he lifted his head with an air of quick decision.

"He can have my room, nurse."

"But, doctor —"

"Take him to my room, please," snapped Hermanson.

A minute or two later he had made a hypodermic injection, and the pain-blurred eyes shut with a gentle flutter of the lids. Then his hand and eye probed deftly for the nature of the injuries to the poor, stripped frame. Hastily he scrawled a few remarks on a diagnosis card.

"He will last till the morning," he said to the nurse, and then hurried away to the operating theater.

It was nearly three hours before Professor Koralnicheff, on his round, reached the patient in Hermanson's room. The great surgeon had worked like a titan, though significant screens round several of the beds showed where even his skill had been of no avail. Hermanson, entering an instant later, swiftly stepped up to him.

"It's useless to take this man to the tables," he

whispered.

"I can see that," replied the professor dryly, stooping and flashing his electric torch in the suf-The closed eyes opened with a shudferer's face. der and wandered with a dumbly questioning stare over those present. The surgeon turned to the eager group of students crowding round him, his face showing great gratification. "Gentlemen. this, according to Dr. Hermanson's preliminary diagnosis, is a very interesting case, perhaps the most interesting in the whole collection. You note that, in spite of the serious lesion to the cervical vertebræ, this man is still able to exercise muscular functions. This would seem to settle the vexed question whether the medulla oblongata retains, by means of the spinal accessory nerve,-"

And so he went on, his voice rising and falling in its well-modulated periods, now dispassionate, now toned up to an enthusiastic fervor as he brought out the more telling points. And all the while that mutely questioning gaze watched him in a frenzy of agonized disquietude. The white lips moved soundlessly, the convulsive fingers crooked in a veritable tetanus of mortal anxiety. Hermanson stood watching the scene — the smugly profes-

sional savant, the eagerly scribbling students, but most of all, the agonies of the doomed man; and over his face spread the blackness of a thunder-cloud. A terrible struggle was going on in his heart. His whole being was working itself up to some tremendously momentous resolve. And when at last it had reached its climax, he stepped forward and quietly laid his hand on the professor's arm.

"One moment, your Excellency," he said.

The low words seemed to fall like a spark in a powder magazine. Or, rather, their effect was as if some heretic had hurled some blasphemous interruption into the conduct of a sacred ceremonial.

"What is it, Dr. Hermanson?" rapped out the professor.

"I would respectfully submit that this is not the time for a vivisectionist experiment."

The surgeon started back. The thought he was about to voice was evidently shared by all present.

"I am afraid, Dr. Hermanson, that you are suffering from some mental aberration."

"No, I am not. You may not be dissecting this man's half-dead body, but you are cutting deep into his living soul. He is fully aware that his hours are numbered, and it would only be human to leave him to make his peace with God."

Professor Koralnicheff's lips contracted into a snarl.

"Dr. Hermanson, I wish to observe that it is rather late in the day for you to remind me of the duty I owe to humanity. It is you rather who seem to have forgotten that the duties of science override every other consideration. The individual does not count in the general scheme of the world's welfare. Gentlemen," he turned back to the students with an apologetic shrug; "after this ill-mannered and quixotic interruption we shall go on to speak of . . ."

"Pardon me, your Excellency," broke in Hermanson, his tone respectful but uncompromising, "we shall not go on. If you persist I shall be compelled to point out to you that this room, being for the time my own private residence, is, so to speak, extra-territorial and does not come under your official jurisdiction."

"In short, you are expelling me."

"I should be sorry to use so harsh a word."

"I presume, Dr. Hermanson," the professor went on with an ill-concealed sneer, "you are aware that you are creating this unpleasantness for the sake of a mere Jew," pointing contemptuously to the "fourcorner garment" that lay among the patient's other clothes at the foot of the bed.

"I am perfectly aware of it, your Excellency."

"Perhaps that is the explanation."

"Perhaps that is the explanation," Hermanson echoed gravely.

"Very well. I need not, of course, add that the matter will not be allowed to remain where it is," said Professor Koralnicheff, the icy politeness of his words accentuating their sinister ring. "Gentlemen, let us pass on."

Hermanson drew a deep breath as he sat down in the once more empty room. So he had crossed the Rubicon! He had, almost in spite of himself, consummated the heroic resolution which had come to him at sight of this man. He had seized the

chance of this vicarious atonement — perhaps it would be counted unto him for righteousness. He would do for his father's brother-in-faith what he had not done for his father himself. He would speed him forth on his dark journey under the proper auspices of his creed. Perhaps these two would meet in the vast realms beyond and his father would know how sincere his son was in his penitence. He smiled at the fanciful notion, but he could allow his sense of hard, scientific truth to be softened for once by this wave of transcendental emotionalism. He would soon enough have to get back to the stern realities of life. He would have to deal with Professor Koralnicheff's parting threat.

He felt a soft touch on his arm.

"Yes, my friend, I am ready for you," he said, turning to the dying man.

"I heard what was said — I understand,"— the white lips spoke in the jargon that is the lingua franca of the majority of his race throughout the globe. "How soon will I die?"

"Sooner than I thought. He has robbed you of some hours," replied Hermanson, wondering at the readiness with which his own tongue shaped itself to his boyhood's speech. "Don't fret. I shall tell you when it is time."

"There is one thing I must do at once. Look in my coat."

Hermanson, obeying, drew from it a bulky pocketbook. At a sign from the dying man he opened it and went through the contents. From his passport it appeared that this was David Liebermann, of Kadansk, in the Government of Minsk, that he was a tolerably wealthy man, for the pocket-book was crammed with crisp notes to the value of some thousands of roubles, and also that he was the father of a daughter. This last was evident from a letter written by her in which was inclosed her photograph.

Hermanson passed the pocket-book to its owner. With stiff, awkward fingers the latter extracted the notes and forced them into Hermanson's hand.

"For you," he muttered. "My Judith will have enough with my blessing."

Hermanson almost smiled. Oh, the purblindness of men! Here was this mortal standing on the very threshold of the Halls of Divine Light, and he still thought that one needed bribing to carry out a sacred, self-imposed task. But the dying must be humored.

He saw only too plainly that the end was at hand. The pallid face had turned to an ashengray. The laboring chest heaved stertorously. Herman sat down by the bedside and gently took the palsied hand in his.

"Is it time?" queried the glazing eyes.

Slowly and distinctly Hermanson enunciated the dying attestation of Unity.

"Hear, oh, Israel, the Lord is our God; the Lord is One."

And slowly the white lips moved in solemn repetition.

"Blessed be His Name and His Glory for ever and ever!"

Three times, according to the prescribed formula, he repeated it, and each time the white lips, though moving more slowly, echoed the words.

And then the final testimony — seven times iterated:

"The Lord, He is God!"

And at the seventh utterance the white lips, kept moving by sheer force of will, drooped and never moved again. David Liebermann had died according to the faith.

With a sigh Hermanson rose, stepped across to the looking-glass and covered it with a white sheet. For a few minutes he strode the room in silent meditation, and then he settled himself down to the task of keeping ward over the poor, empty husk of mortality, lest, according to the superstition he called to mind, the powers of Tophet should enter and take possession of it.

The night passed quickly. Hermanson felt neither weary nor lonesome, for he was provided both with pastime and company. The photograph in the pocket-book served for both. Several times he took it out and examined it with pent scrutiny. The sweet face of the girl, resembling, despite its fresh young charm, the gnarled dead face on the pillow, spoke to him with a strangely familiar ap-The soft, almond-shaped eyes sent him a message to which he did not find it difficult to respond. He thought it curious that all through the night no summons came to him to minister to any of the Professor Koralnicheff had eviother patients. dently begun his protest by dispensing with his services. Hermanson accepted the implied ostracism with a shrug of indifference. He need not complain; it suited his purpose very well.

Early in the morning he sent for the members of the Holy Society—the euphemistically-named corporation whose duty it is to prepare the dead for burial. At midday had been fixed the inquest on David Liebermann, which was attended by representatives of the police and of the railway company. Hermanson was present in his professional capacity. The pocket-book was put in for evidence of identity, but it did not contain the money nor the photograph. Hermanson thought it advisable, for reasons which required no specification, to keep both out of the range of official cognizance.

After the inquest he felt himself at liberty to give his attention to a matter of personal importance, the nature and necessity of which had been a vague undercurrent to his thoughts through his vigil. His one great resolve had heartened him for other heroic measures. He could not say that they did not cost him a pang and he wished that the impending interview were done with. But, though one cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs, it consoled him to think that sacrifices could occasionally be made without too much breaking of hearts on both sides.

His errand took him to the aristocratic quarter of the town. He paused for a moment outside the palatial residence of Baron Solokov, with its imposing marble façade, and then ran lightly up the great stone staircase. He thought that there was something studied in the manner of the liveried flunkey who admitted him, as if the man were bursting with the importance of secret instructions. To Hermanson's inquiry whether Mlle. Solokov was in he replied with a silent bow and as silently ushered the visitor into a sitting-room.

Hermanson was, somehow, not surprised when, after he had been waiting a few minutes in the garishly resplendent apartment, the door opened and there entered, not his fiancée, but a pompouslooking man, with a large, foolish face and an expansive white waistcoat, the waistcoat showing nearly as much expression as the face. To Hermanson's greeting and outstretched hand he replied with a distant and disagreeable nod.

"I preferred to tell you myself that Natalie left town this morning," he said, his voice harsh and rasping. "She has gone to stay for a few days at the country seat of Princess Ulanski."

"What, without a word of good-by to me?" smiled Hermanson.

"We thought it better. Dr. Hermanson, I am disgusted at the disgraceful incident which took place at the hospital last night."

"That is how every right-minded man should feel about it, my dear baron. Your sentiments do you honor. Do you think Professor Koralnicheff will be reprimanded?"

"I think your flippancy very much out of place," said the baron acidly. "I don't know what possessed you to put this public affront on one of the most distinguished men of our day, a Councilor of State, a knight of the St. Stanislaus — and above all a most valued and respected friend of my family."

"Ak. I Steps: that," murmured Hermanson abwardy.

Ranus Suinieut gave lim a sharp look.

"If course, the most unjournant feature of the affair," he continued slowly, " is that you were indiscret enough to flama the bar sinister of your birth in the world's face. Why wake sleeping dogs? When my daughter winhed me to accept you as my prospective moninclaw I asked no questions. Acting on my lead the members of my set did likewise. It was enough that you professed yourself an adherent of the dominant faith to which my family, I am proud to say, has now belonged for three generations. And now you go and upset your assured position by this puerile, this asinine . . ."

"My dear haron, I am extremely sorry to have been guilty of conduct which makes words fail you,"

said Hermanson with affected concern.

"Pardon me, but they do not fail me," replied the other, spacing his words in his ludicrously pretentious way. "I am reminded of the fact that under the Spanish Inquisition such behavior as yours would have ranked you as a "relapsus," and would have consigned you to the stake. Fortunately . . ."

"Yen, fortunately we are living under the spiritual away not of the Holy Office but of the Holy Mynod, whose mercy, like that of God Himself, endureth forever."

"Let us come to the point," said the baron sharply. "Professor Koralnicheff has told me that, in deference to our friendship, he will be satisfied with what he may consider an adequate apology

from you. It is, of course, unnecessary to bring any great pressure to bear on you to offer him the same."

"Oh, quite unnecessary."

"Ah!" exclaimed the baron with evident relief.

"Because I am determined not to apologize."

The baron gasped like a hooked fish.

"For the reason," continued Hermanson calmly, "that my conscience is perfectly clear. I have nothing for which to reproach myself."

"Indeed? And are you aware of what the consequences may be?" the baron asked icily.

"I am not. But I am quite prepared to take them."

A wild, impotent rage seemed to seize the other man, making his ruddy countenance go white.

"But I insist that you shall apologize," he cried, his voice rising almost to a scream. "I insist. You shall take my car. You shall go to Professor Koralnicheff at once . . ."

"I shall certainly not go at once, even if I intended to go at all," said Hermanson quietly. "I can't. I have an important appointment."

"In that case, Dr. Hermanson,"— the baron drew himself up, as if he had suddenly remembered what he owed to his dignity. "I have been commissioned by my daughter to return you — this."

"Thank you," said Hermanson bowing, as he picked up the ring which the baron had laid on the table and placed it in his pocket. He was not pettyminded enough to tell the baron that he had saved him the trouble of taking the initiative. And then without another word he turned and left the room and the house.

The important appointment of which he had spoken was David Liebermann's funeral. He was the chief, in fact, he was the only mourner. The ten men he had hired to form the quorum for the burial service and memorial sanctification stood by with bored, indifferent faces. As he threw the customary three shovels of earth down upon the plain deal coffin, he glanced round sharply, like a man who has unexpectedly heard himself called by name. Who was it had called him?

It was a question which, together with various others, he tried to answer as he wandered solitarily through the quiet country lanes. His first difficulty, he knew, would be his position at the hospital. That would require a good deal of thought. But when he reached home, late that evening, he found that the difficulty had already been solved for him. Awaiting him was an official-enveloped letter.

"The Procurator of the Medical Faculty," it said, "has the honor of informing Dr. Maurice Hermanson that the Council of the said Faculty have granted him indefinite leave of absence from his duties at the Government Hospital, without salary."

He read the letter attentively. So his enemies had not lost any time. And he clasped his hands with a gesture of fervent thankfulness and laughed a half-sobbing laugh.

III

In the days that ensued Hermanson had ample leigure to solve the enigma of his paradoxical

emotions at what should have appeared an overwhelming calamity. He had been glad and grateful for the knowledge that his self-renunciation was being accepted. It seemed to him a happy omen that ultimately he would be allowed to work out his atonement to the full.

Ultimately — for he had a strong presentiment that his period of probation was not yet over. So far he had only been called upon to make a jettison of his ambitions. But in his heart he knew that the time would come when he would be given the opportunity of making other and still greater sacrifices. His soul would have to pass through even fiercer fires before he could consider himself purged. What were these still larger sacrifices to be? What further ordeal was still to be exacted from him? And would he have the courage to rise to the height of it?

He put his conjectures aside. He would not minimize the event by its anticipation. His more immediate task was to dig amid the débris of his shattered career and see what could be saved from it. Not much, he found. He could never expect another government appointment. The black mark was against him, and bureaucratic ink was indelible.

That was as it should be. But if he wished to achieve his purpose, he must survive. He must find a means of livelihood. At thirty-five he must begin again at the very bottom of the ladder. For sometime to come the future need have no terrors for him. He had been frugal in his habits and had put a little by against a rainy day. And then there

was David Liebermann's legacy, his right to which no one, unless it was himself, could dispute.

And that reminded him, if any reminder beyond that photograph was necessary to him, that he had not yet carried out the full provisions of the dead man's last will and testament. In that same testament he had bequeathed to his daughter his blessing. It would have to be handed over to her. The photograph had played a large part, in his life these latter days. It exercised over him a curiously compelling force. At times, as he looked at it, it filled him with a prophetic fear. He almost wished David Liebermann had never had a daughter.

It took him two weeks to put his affairs at Charkov in order, and then he started out for It was a long, wearisome journey into the heart of the Pale of Settlement. He had looked forward with some apprehension to this incursion into the herding-place of his racial brethren. had been used for so many years to the large free atmosphere of the outer world and he did not know how his lungs would take to the stagnant exhalations of this great geographical prison. He might have saved himself his qualms. The deeper he penetrated, the more deeply a joyously welcoming warmth stole into his heart. He felt the tremulous exultation of a life-long wanderer returning to his native home. No gulf of time had to be bridged With one stride he seemed to step back into over. his own.

As the train finally drew up at his destination, a strange thing happened to him. His eye caught sight of the name of the town on the station sign-

board. Kadansk! Something came home to him at this ocular demonstration of the name which his mental vision had been unable to grasp. Its written presentment filled him with a sense of familiar recollection. This was surely not the first time that it had struck to the inmost recesses of his brain. One by one the many accumulated strata seemed to clear away from the bed-rock of his mind.

And at last he suppressed a choking cry, his heart stopped beating and then began to pulse again with a wildly exultant throb. He remembered. Kadansk was the place to which their desperate steps had strained the night his father had died, the night that had marked for him his emancipation from the fetters of the "Guide of the Perplexed"! He had come back to the opening scene of his life's tragedy, he had come within the purlieus of the nameless grave, the shrine at which his soul could alone be salved with forgiveness. Was it to be? His thoughts shrank from exhausting the glad possibility.

It was no difficult matter to find his way to David Liebermann's late home. From the answers to his inquiries he perceived that the dead man had been a figure of some importance in the place. The sight of his house confirmed the impression. It could almost be called a mansion. He entered it, a strange tightness constraining his throat and rendering him almost inarticulate,—more so when at length he stood face to face with the original of the photograph.

He saw at a glance that the picture libeled her by its inadequacy. It was a tolerably faithful replica of form and features, but it showed nothing of the spiritual grandeur that spoke from those sad, lustrous eyes. She was very young, scarcely out of her teens, it would appear. She carried herself with the grace and dignity of a young queen. The black garb she wore set into striking relief the chiseled alabaster of her delicate features. It reminded Hermanson, as a side issue, that she had already been informed of her bereavement, no doubt by the railway company. It filled him with an ironic pride that his country had at least advanced so far in observing the common decencies of civilization.

"To what am I indebted for this honor?" she asked, irresolutely twirling his visiting card in her fingers.

"It was my melancholy duty to attend your father in his last hours," he replied. "I am—that is to say, I was—one of the doctors at the hospital to which he was brought. It may relieve your mind to hear that he was buried with all the orthodox rites of a pious Jew. I saw to that."

Her deep eyes filled with tears.

"You did?"

"Yes. Why should it surprise you?"

"Because — because for the moment it did not appear to me that you are one of our people."

"I have passed most of my life amid Gentiles. I suppose there is something in the theory of assimilation to environment," he said with a fugitive smile. He saw he was not talking over her head. "I may say that my main reason for coming here is the fact that your father appointed me, in part, ad-

ministrator to his estate. He entrusted me with a considerable sum of money which, at my first opportunity, I hasten to hand over to you," and he placed the pocket-book on the table between them. "I am also, what no doubt you will think yet more acceptable, the bearer of his dying blessing to you."

She sat down, her resigned manner veering round to a pitiful effort for self-control, and motioned him to be seated likewise.

"Tell me about my dear father," came tremblingly from her lips.

He told her all he thought she ought to know. When he had finished she suddenly buried her face in her hands and burst into a violent fit of weeping. He gave her time to recover herself.

"It was God's will," he at last reminded her gently.

"Oh, it is not that," she murmured between her lessening sobs. "My heart is breaking at the thought that I may never be able to see my father's grave."

"What's that?" he asked quickly. He was taken aback by the coincidence that here was another human being which might never set eyes on its parent's burial place.

"As soon as I had the news," she replied, "I went to the police station to get a passport visé for Charkov. I was told that I would not be allowed to go. I have made every effort — all in vain."

Hermanson set his lips tight. It came to him with an unpleasant shock that the incident had attained to the dignity of a departmental dossier.

He could not help feeling that he himself had been the unwitting cause of her trouble. It was plain that the ill-will attaching to him was to extend to every detail connected with the affair. His kindness had been a double-edged sword. It occurred to him only vaguely that the mark against himself was even blacker than he had imagined it to be.

He did not stay very much longer, but long enough to learn some particulars about her life. She was her father's only child. Her mother had died some years ago. And now she was solitary in this large house, solitary in the world, save for her father's mother, who had always lived with them. Hermanson saw the old lady before he went, a typical mother in Israel, decorous in her crushing grief, wearing her sorrow like a crown. Hermanson thought of Rachel, the matriarch.

"Will you be coming again?" Judith Liebermann asked, with a sweet, shy frankness.

"If you wish me to. I may be staying here a little while."

"It will take me such a long, long time to tell you all that I owe to you."

IV

Hermanson went away, his brows knitted as he pondered her last words. He took away with him many new thoughts, but also one old feeling, grown and intensified, the vague fear of her for which he could not account.

The next morning he started on his quest, eagerly pursuing the slender clew he had to go upon. He hired a conveyance and commenced a systematic reconnaissance of the environments of Kadansk. But the days passed, and he got no nearer to his goal. Progress had made inroads even into this hinterland of civilization. The morasses had been drained, the foul little wayside inns swept away. At several, which corresponded to some extent with his faded recollections, he ventured to make inquiries, only to be impressed more deeply with the hopelessness of his task.

People looked with suspicion and distrust upon this elegantly-clad stranger, who asked such pressing questions concerning a murder which had taken place in these parts some twenty years ago. ders were ugly things to talk about, even though the victim had been merely an old Jewish peddler. And Hermanson's outlook became clouded with the shadow of certain failure, and even more so by the uncertain and self-contradictory emotions with which each time he came away from the presence of Judith Liebermann. There was something in her attitude to him which tempted him to sing pæans of victory, and vet again he could not shake off the feeling that in some way her companionship was fraught for him with unspeakable heartache and catastrophe.

He had just left her and returned to his hotel, where he was informed that a gentleman was waiting to see him in his room.

He entered, a polite commonplace on his lips, and then remained in the doorway, speechless with astonishment. His un-named visitor was Baron Solokov.

"The last person you expected to see," said the baron, almost affably.

"I admit it frankly."

"To tell the truth, I am quite as much surprised as you to see myself here. But then women make men do all sorts of queer things, in spite of our better judgment. My dear Hermanson, I am here at the instance of my daughter."

"I hope Mlle. Solokov is well," said Hermanson coldly.

"Quite well, thank you. Or at any rate nearly so. She is a little troubled in mind. She has lately given way to curious fancies, or, to be accurate, one curious fancy."

"Which can hardly concern me, baron."

"Strangely enough it concerns you rather closely," said the other, coughing with slight embarrassment. "Natalie is not quite satisfied about the way in which your — your engagement was broken off. She has an idea that, to some extent, it put her under a slur."

"What, despite the fact that the breach came from her?" asked Hermanson with a dry smile.

"Yes, in spite of it. What seems to rankle in her mind is the point that you took your congé so readily. She thinks you ought to have made more of a fight for her. It almost gave people the idea that you were anxious to get rid of her. She wants to correct that idea. A rather petty form of vanity, I admit, but then, you see, she is full of whims. Her mother has spoiled her. Natalie is her favor-

ite daughter. Her mother was just the same. Indeed, when my wife and I were engaged . . ."

"May I ask you for the object of your call?" Hermanson broke in brusquely.

"Oh, yes, of course. Well, my dear Hermanson, Natalie wishes you to return to Charkov and to take part in a bit of play-acting. The breach is to be, ostensibly, patched up. You are to show yourself the heart-broken, repentant lover whom she has taken back into her good graces. This will rehabilitate her in the eyes of her girl friends. A whim, I repeat, a foolish whim. And then, when things are once more in their statu quo . . ."

"She will throw me over with great éclat, as a quite impossible person. Her powers of fascination will be vindicated. And on what terms am I to lend myself to this piece of buffoonery?"

"I was coming to that," said the baron eagerly. "As a quid pro quo I can offer you a good prospect of your reinstatement. That most generous-minded of men, Professor Koralnicheff, is, mainly at my earnest solicitations, still open to an apology. It may, perhaps, have to take a somewhat humbler form than before, but . . ."

"The terms are not good enough. In fact, I am not prepared to agree on any terms. I have the honor to wish you a good evening."

The puffed features of Baron Solokov seemed to swell visibly with rage and chagrin. His little eyes narrowed to mere slits.

"Very well. I have only this to add, Dr. Hermanson. You see what has resulted from your ignoring my previous warning. What may be the

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outcome of your present recalcitrance, I will leave to your imagination. I happen to be in the confidence of certain highly-placed persons, and — ah, but we shall see what we shall see."

As he stamped out of the room, Hermanson threw himself into a chair, his whole frame shaking with a grim merriment. In the midst of the somber circumstances of his life this farcical interlude had come as almost a welcome relief. He pictured the situation — the vain, peacocking doll, whom for the sake of his worldly advancement he had desired to make his wife, hatching this preposterous plan in her sawdust brain, her doting fool of a father lending himself fatuously to its execution. . . .

Bah, and these were the people for whom he had been willing to throw away his self-respect. As to the baron's menace, he dismissed it with an airy wave of his hand. They had done their worst—what more could they do? They had taken his past; his future was his own. But he forgot that the national emblem of Russia, the double-headed eagle, looks both ways.

One result, however, of the baron's unexpected visit was to give his actions a more practical turn. He must not wait till his nest-egg was exhausted. He must take to work. There was no reason why he should not set up in private practice, and Kadansk offered as good opportunities as any other place. It would keep him within the radius of his search. Though his efforts till now had proved fruitless, he had an instinctive hope that, whether by accident or design, he would yet come upon the object of his quest. And then there was Judith

Liebermann — and again his mind oscillated between his conflicting sensations; was she an additional attraction or the one consideration to make him hesitate in his resolve?

However, two or three days later, having meanwhile perfected his plans, he called at the town gendarmerie to take out his papers of denizenship. The clerk, to whom he stated his name and purpose, listened to him in polite silence, and then rising, disappeared into the inner office. A minute or two later he came back and opened the grille door for Hermanson to step through.

"This way, please. The Commissioner wishes to see you."

Hermanson obeyed, and presently he stood facing a pleasant-mannered man, who courteously signaled him to a chair.

"I understand, Dr. Hermanson," he said urbanely, "that you wish to settle in Kadansk to follow your vocation as a doctor."

Hermanson nodded assent, feeling a vague disquietude.

The Commissioner stroked his chin.

- "Your call is opportune," he said. "It saves me the trouble of sending for you, as I was just about to do."
- "I am glad," said Hermanson, his words belying his thought. It was never an auspicious thing to be sent for by a Commissioner of Police.
- "I regret to say that it is impossible for me to accede to your request."
- "Impossible?" echoed Hermanson, keeping a steady front.

"I have this morning received instructions to ask you to quit Kadansk, and, in fact, the Government of Minsk, within forty-eight hours."

"I shall appeal!" Hermanson cried hotly.

"An appeal will be useless. The instructions have come from the Ministry of the Interior direct. They are very explicit. Unless you leave of your own accord, I have orders to escort you over the frontier by 'étape.'"

"But this is monstrous!" exclaimed Hermanson, pale to the lips. "For what reason?"

"I am not at liberty to state any reasons. Nor would it help you if I did."

"Very good. Thank you."

\mathbf{v}

Hermanson walked out of the gendarmerie, erect, his shoulders squared. his enemies, at any rate, should not have the satisfaction of being told that their thunderbolt had prostrated him to the earth. So after all Baron Solokov's farce had had a serious dénouement.

How serious Hermanson did not disguise to himself for a moment. He knew quite well that although his expulsion and inhibition applied, on the face of them, only to his present abode, they would extend to any and every other. The arm of official spite was long and absolutely relentless.

He would be hounded from place to place. He would become a latter-day Ahasuerus, finding no

rest for the sole of his foot. But the great fact which counted was that he would have to leave Kadansk. He would have to relinquish his quest for that nameless grave. And he would have to leave Judith Liebermann. Whether he loved her more, or feared her more, did not matter now.

Well, if he had to go, he would, so he decided in an access of self-mortifying bravado, go at once. His preparations would not take him long. Indeed, all they amounted to was one farewell. And he would not dally with that.

A glance at Judith Liebermann told him that some strong emotion was agitating her. It was impossible that she should know already. But her own feelings seemed to become subordinated by what she saw in his face.

- "Something has happened!" she exclaimed.
- "Nothing. I have only come to say good-by."
- "Oh, not for long, I hope!"
- "Forever. The police have ordered me to leave Kadansk almost immediately."
 - "Where for?"
- "For nowhere," he replied with a grim laugh. "Russia wants to show me how large she is. And when I have exhausted the land, I suppose there is still the sea and the air."

Her arms suddenly went out towards him with a gesture of supplication.

- "Oh, forgive me forgive me!" she cried.
- "Forgive you, my dear Judith? What is there to forgive?"
- "You are persecuted on account of what you have done for me."

"You are talking wildly. I have done nothing for you."

"What you did for my father, and therefore for me. Oh, I know everything."

He stepped back in great perplexity.

"I have found out for myself what you omitted to tell me," she went on, speaking with more control of herself. "I could not bear any longer the mystery which surrounded your presence here. I wrote to a rabbi at Charkov, one of my father's friends. I received his reply last night, after you were gone. He told me what, he said, had at the time been the talk of the town. He told me the reason of your dismissal from the hospital, the powerful enemies you made for the sake of a stranger, all the story of your great-heartedness..."

For a while he watched her grief giving itself vent. Then he said gently:

"Judith, since you know, you know. But you are mistaken. There is still nothing for which you have to ask my forgiveness. You and yours have done me no wrong. What I did, I did not so much for your father's sake as for my own. Pure selfishness, I assure you. There is nothing more."

ness, I assure you. There is nothing more."

"Nothing more? But you are going away. Is that a little thing?" she wailed. Then all at once a glorious look of resolution haloed her face. "No, Maurice, wherever you are going, you are not going away from me. Oh, let me go with you. As your wife, but also as your humble slave; let me help you carry your burden; I have a claim to that. And I promise you that I will claim nothing more, not

your love, not the great place in the world which will still be yours, nothing but the right of making you what little compensation I can."

He had reeled back as though stunned by a blow. So that was the meaning of the unconscious terror she had instilled into him. He had feared her because he knew the day would come when their mutual love would burst forth in its dazzling apocalypse. He had shrunk from her because he had known, even before he had seen her, that she was the only woman on earth who could bring him the joy of life. And he also knew that with his quest unfulfilled, with that nameless grave undiscovered, he dared not put the cup of happiness to his lips.

This was what fate had stored up for him as his culminating act of atonement. This was the self-denying ordinance which he must lay on his soul before he could cry quits with his conscience. And with the opportunity must come the strength. He stepped close to her and, giant though he felt, his voice and the touch of his hand were as gentle as any woman's.

"Thank you, dearest. Your words are very precious to me. And just because they are so precious I must make myself deaf to them. To be my wife — you! I would not have waited for you to ask me if I could have asked you myself. I owe some one a great debt, which I must pay with my life, my sufferings. And the greater they are, the nearer I know I have come to my pardon."

"Your sufferings!" There was a world of loving reproach in her words. "Yes, you have the right to pay your debt with your own pangs, but not with mine."

"Oh, short-sighted that you are, my love!" he said, his eyes gazing steadfastly into the limpid depths of hers. "Must I tell you, Judith — can you not see for yourself, dearest one? When this world was created you were assigned to me as my twin-self. If I suffer by myself, I suffer but half. Remember, you were ready to help me carry my load. Prove to me now that you are sincere. Make your love your martyrdom — for my sake. And then I shall know that God, by giving me such a woman's love, will at last make me worthy of His."

She shook her head in a dazed, dull fashion.

"I cannot argue with you," she murmured. "I cannot see into the depths of your mind just as I cannot reach up to the height of your soul." She paused and leaped up with a broken little cry at a soft rustling sound. The damask portière, which divided the two adjoining rooms, had parted and through it David Liebermann's mother came walking towards them with a slow and solemn gait. "Oh, help me, help me to make him do what I ask!" sobbed Judith.

"No, my child, I shall not help you," said the old woman, gathering the girl's trembling form into her embrace. "I have heard all he said. There is nothing to be done. He must go his own way."

Hermanson caught his breath. Had he hoped, in the waywardness of the human heart, that her grandchild would have found an ally in her? He had conquered, but there are victories that bow the victor to the dust.

"I must go," he said after a pause, with a dull sense of the platitude of his words.

"Yes, you shall go, my son, and God go with you," said David Liebermann's mother. "But the ways of life are dark and intricate. Let me give you something that will shed light on your road. Wait."

Gently she loosened herself from Judith's clinging fold, unlocked the ebony chiffonier, and presently came back to him, holding a book in her hand.

"Dr. Hermanson," she said, a tear rolling down her wizened cheek, "my dear dead son was a good man. He did many good deeds — may the Master of the World reward him for them in the World Eternal. But of all his meritorious acts this book stood to him for what he considered his greatest. He loved this book. I am sure he would like to make you some recompense for all you did for him. Neither his mother nor his daughter have anything worthy to offer you. So take it, my son. It will be a talisman to shield you from all evil on earth."

Vacantly Hermanson took the book from her trembling hand. But he saw that his own trembled no less. He felt a premonition that this tattered volume was pregnant for him with a momentousness that made it the very pivot of his life. He hardly dared to glance at it. And when at last he allowed his gaze to rest on it, he stiffened as at a galvanic shock, and then as quickly he slackened again. His professional instinct told him that he must let his tension relax, or else something in his brain would snap and he would go mad or die.

Slowly, almost negligently, he seated himself at

the table, and with limp, nerveless fingers opened the volume. About the middle of it some pages should be missing. He had torn them out himself in a frenzy of revolt, and had been nearly beaten to death for it. He felt those blows now. They were benign caresses. And presently he had come to the place, and there, surely enough, the lacuna gaped at him. He knew—he had known it from the start—that this was his father's copy of the "Guide of the Perplexed."

"Tell me about this book. How did your son come to it?" His voice seemed to roll back on him as from unmeasured distances.

"It happened many years ago," began the old woman, with the readiness of one harping on a theme dear to her heart, "even before this granddaughter of mine — God spare her — was born. was winter time. My son was hurrying back on his sleigh to be home for the Purim Feast. But a great snow storm bound him on the way. It was weather not for man and not for beast. He came to a lonely There was no one to hostel and asked for shelter. answer him. A fire was still burning in the grate. but the place was empty. Empty, save for the dead body of a Jew, who lay there stabbed to heart. Then my son knew why all had fled. In a knapsack close by he found some books, this one among them, and my son saw that the dead man had been a scholar, to be honored in death. There was no one to question and no one to answer. My son put him on his sleigh and brought him here. And here he is buried. His grave is tended to this day. no doubt it was for this that God vouchsafed my son

the mercy of being laid to rest among his people, even as he laid this stranger to rest. That is all. A simple story," and again the tears rolled slowly down her cheeks.

Hermanson did not speak. He knew now why destiny had thrown David Liebermann into his path — David Liebermann, of all others!

"And this stranger, you say, sleeps in Kadansk Cemetery," he observed after a pause, now once more fully master of himself. "Can anybody show me the grave?"

"The smallest child can."

"Then let me be the smallest child," said Judith quickly. Her womanly intuition told her that some wonderful thing was happening here, that the finger of God was pointing the way — whither? And her heart was poised flutteringly on the edge of a glad suspense.

Hermanson turned and looked at her for a long time. Then he said simply:

"Come, Judith."

They reached their destination, having scarcely exchanged a word. But in the silently electric interchange of their thoughts they had told each other many things. They halted before the simple mound, trimly bordered with glazed bricks. A marble headstone gleamed bright in the wintry sunshine. Hermanson saw why the old woman had talked of this grave as being known to all. The white headstone was singled out from all others by bearing no name. So it was the nameless grave after all! In its center it showed, in great gilt letters, simply the word "Orach." Yes, here he

rested, the stranger-guest, to whom all these native hosts around him had accorded their ready hospitality. Hermanson bent forward and pressed his lips to the gilt-lettered word.

They stood there for a long time, wrapped in each other's presence, that third and unseen presence standing between and yet binding them with a closer link. Judith's lips were moving voicelessly, but Hermanson knew what they said.

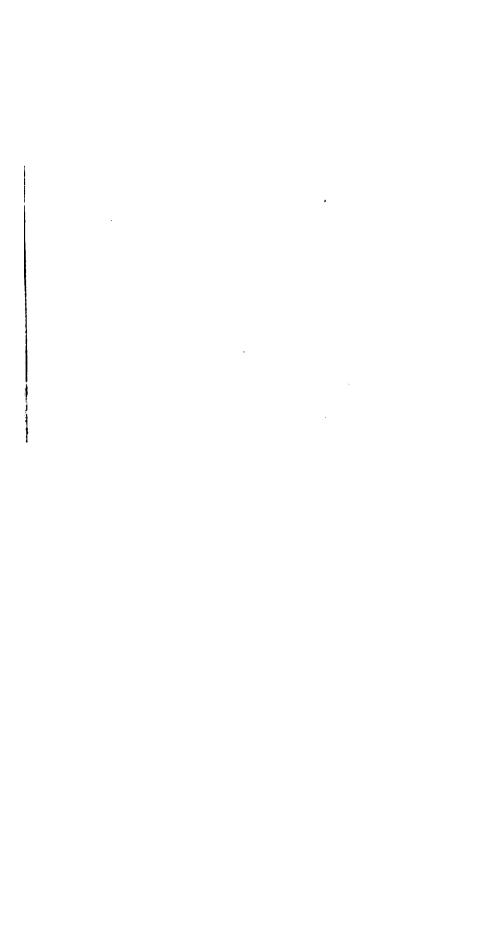
"We may go now," he whispered at last, gently drawing her away. "He has heard me. He must have heard. My own prayers might have been too feeble to reach him, but they have been redoubled by those of my twin-self. Judith, my father has greeted you as his daughter, even as he has once more accepted me for his son. Let us go. Our happiness is calling us. . . ."

She looked up at him with a despairingly questioning little gasp.

"No, not here," he reassured her, "not here, Judith, in these chill vastnesses of gloom and fratricidal hate, but away in the distant homes of liberty, in the wide warm-hearted lands of the Westering Sun. Come, dearest, let us go."

THE END







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